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THE APES OF GOD: POLITICS OF THE ARTIST

by

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MATTHEW

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ABSTRACT

"The Apes of God: Politics of the Artist" is a study of Wyndham Lewis's The Apes of God (1930), a work which has never been the subject of extended textual analysis. Many critics have simply dismissed it in a few sentences of praise or damning; fewer than half a dozen have devoted to it a discussion--usually fairly generalized--of chapter length. Typically, Paul Edwards, in the most recently published critical response to the book ("The Apes of God: Form and Meaning"), writes some fifteen pages about it, then closes his discussion with the resigned statement: "The phrase 'neglected masterpiece' is used often, but it justly describes The Apes of God" (p. 148).

Begun in 1923, the novel evolved over seven years. Its content and structure reflect many of the changes that occurred in Lewis's own professional and personal life and in the political, social, and artistic worlds that defined the inter-war years. At the outset of the dissertation I describe the various contexts in which Lewis composed the book.

To understand The Apes of God as a roman à clef is of primary importance. Many of the novel's character-models were well-to-do contemporaries of Lewis who spent much of their leisure time writing and painting, producing passable artifacts, but, as Lewis said, "less than the 'real thing'." Relatively unknown even among their contemporaries, they remain, for the most part, background figures in our present conception of the art world of the 1920s. But they were, as I indicate, major figures in Lewis's own experience of the era.

The Apes of God is discussed here as a roman à clef, however, not merely for the purpose of identifying, for its own sake, who in the narrative scheme was who in real life. For Lewis, many of the characters he depicted represented significant contemporary phenomena, and part of the function of the dissertation is to examine the relationship between Lewis's satiric form and his rationale for choosing to satirize specific individuals from among his contemporaries.

As satire and roman à clef, The Apes of God is an investigation into the nature of what Lewis referred to as "the insipidity and decay" that crept into English culture and politics in the "trough" between the two World Wars. Lewis reflected, in 1942, that in The Apes of God one could find "all the politics" one wanted with respect to the artistic, cultural, and social life of that period. This dissertation attempts to expose the political roots of the novel, revealed most forcibly in the structural framework of the narrative and the articulated art-politics of the encyclical.

In writing about The Apes of God both as roman à clef and as a complex response to a socio-political world, I discuss, individually, most of the major characters who people the book. Like The Apes of God itself, this dissertation is largely defined by the people--both real and imaginary--whom Lewis chose to occupy and, by their presence, to define what for him was the England of the inter-war years.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Manuscript materials listed in the List of Works Cited are described by means of the standard forms of abbreviation utilized in the description of manuscript material:

M	-manuscript
A	-autograph (holograph)
T	-typed
L	-letter
S	-signed
Aman.	-amanuensis
Init.	-initialed
Frag.	-fragment

Manuscript collections are abbreviated as follows:

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Cornell	-Cornell University Library Department of Rare Books
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S.U.N.Y.A.B. (Buffalo)	-The Poetry/Rare Books Collection, University Libraries of The State University of New York at Buffalo

INTRODUCTION

[The Apes of God] is no more than realism and not one act in it is out of keeping or beyond the limits of the characters as portrayed and/or of characters known to the present critic. I don't say that all these events strictly occurred but they are, to a degree that no inexpert foreigner is likely to credit, acts of a time and place, and they form a symbol not only of themselves or a picture of a small bevy of idiots, but do definitely diagnose a state of society. . . .

--Ezra Pound, "Augment of the Novel" (1941)

The Apes of God has never received the close critical attention it deserves. It has not benefited from the kind of analysis that would succeed in penetrating what Ezra Pound, in an essay published in 1941, describes as the author's creation--in his work of 1912 to "The Apes"--of: "the burning blare meant to get the subject onto the film somehow, anyhow, but to get the damn'd thing recorded, to make his terrorized or dithering reader see what is there before him. . . ."[1] In this essay, entitled "Augment of the Novel," Pound dismisses the notion that The Apes of God is merely a fantasia (as has so often been assumed); at the same time, he draws attention to what the novel, properly regarded, should be seen to be. Evoking, first of all, a commonly-articulated though little explained approach to the work, he draws attention to the novel as a roman à clef. Yet, despite the fact that like so many of his contemporaries he was initially "distracted" from the novel "as 'work,' as 'book' by similarities of the people portrayed with individuals [he had] observed in real life,"[2] Pound insists that The Apes of God is not "in its main aspect, a roman à clef."[3] He points to another, and in his eyes a more significant, pole of interpretation: a socio-political exegesis responding to the fact that, as Pound puts it, "the book is essential to the understanding of a twenty year English epoch."[4]

The novel's complexity and coherence rest on these two poles of interpretation that Pound suggests: The Apes of God as a roman à clef and as an extended descriptive symbology of an era. The structures and themes of the book are related in such a way that the characters who define the novel as a roman à clef contribute also to the formation and understanding of its broader socio-political framework. In other words, Lewis projected onto his real-life character models symbolic values related to the nature of each character's identity and role in what Lewis called "that great period of unrest"[5] between the wars--symbolic values that actually contribute to the reader's understanding of The Apes of God. The elements of the roman à clef, that is, need not be disposed of by the critic who wishes to encounter the less immediate, less personal applications of the work. These elements can be seen, rather, to form an integral part of any extended critical response to the novel as (in Pound's words) one of the books "that any serious reader in 1960 will most certainly have to read if he wants to get any sort of idea of what happened in Europe between one of our large wars and another."[6]

The analysis of The Apes of God presented here could be seen as an attempt to demonstrate the truth and worth of Pound's 1941 assessment of the novel, even though neither the structure nor the theme of this dissertation grew out of any conscious attempt to respond to Pound's statement. Rather, repeated close readings of the work and of related Lewisiana (both published and unpublished) seemed to demand the dual approach to the novel that has defined the form of this interpretation. The Apes of God is a roman à clef and it is a complexly articulated response to an age of transition: England between the wars. Although the narrative line of the novel begins in the middle of the decade of the 1920s and ends in 1926, its author's perceptions and assessments penetrate and illuminate cultural and historical events, as Pound has suggested, that began long before the General Strike of 1926 and (if one allows for what might be referred to as Lewis's prophetic insight) extended even beyond 1929, the year the novel was declared ready for publication.

* * *

Because of Lewis's method of working; because of the obvious relationship between his philosophical or critical and narrative works; because of his stance as "Enemy," his role as pamphleteer, his belief that works like The Apes of God need to be not only written and published but "defended and explained";[7] and finally because The Apes of God was composed over a span of seven years and during a time when Lewis published more items covering a broader spectrum of topics than at any other period in his career,[8] I have found it useful and necessary to bring to bear on the matter of this narrative text the wealth of commentary to be found in various of Lewis's other writings (including those insights recorded and/or published after the completion of the novel).[9] One of the most useful effects of incorporating Lewisian commentary into a study of The Apes of God is the demonstration of the place of the novel within the context of a conversation Lewis carried on over several decades with those in his world who would listen.

By supplying pertinent commentary and analysis, as the text seems to warrant it, this dissertation is meant to provide the reader of The Apes of God with what could variously be termed an exegesis, a type of "reader's guide," or at least an introduction to the novel. The first critical attempt at a full-length exegetical commentary on The Apes of God, this study is divided into two major sections which could be defined loosely as (a) general context and definitions and (b) exegesis. The exegetical nature of the work has determined, to a large extent, the internal structure of much of the thesis, which tends, like the novel which is its subject, to be episodic. The smaller divisions of the commentary, also on the model of the novel itself, are generally focused on individual characters.

Some parts of The Apes of God receive more extensive attention than others because in most cases they are deemed, for a variety of reasons, to be proportionately more significant in terms of the novel's overall structural and thematic patterns. The general aim of this thesis is to guide the reader through the novel--not necessarily chronologically, but section by section--and through the pursuit of the text's countless numbers of artistic, social, political, literary, and personal allusions, to lead him or her to a fresh understanding of Lewis's gargantuan work.

PART ONE: THE CONTEXT

1. POLITICS

But always my aim has been the same--
to help people to react to septic
infections.

--Wyndham Lewis, "Personal Statement" (1940?)

a. Politics of the Artist

This thesis is entitled "The Apes of God: Politics of the Artist." Considering the controversial nature of Lewis's widespread reputation as a spokesman for the political right,[1] some might consider it imprudent to refer to any conception of politics at all when labelling a discussion of Lewis's work. In fact, the subject of this study is only tangentially related to Lewis's so-called right-wing tendencies. The term "politics" as it appears in the title, "The Apes of God: Politics of the Artist," and as it defines a subject under investigation in this dissertation, refers to the shaping and distribution of power among individuals and groups spread over a broad domain of human activity and interaction including--but not restricted to--the distribution of power or influence or authority in the state.

This study is focused on some elements of the "political" in Lewis's thought, the "political," that is, as he himself implicitly defined the term when he considered "The Politics of the Personality" as the title for Time and Western Man (1927),[2] "The Politics of Philistia" and "The Politics of the Primitive" as titles for The Art of Being Ruled (1926),[3] or "The Politics of the Intellect" as a title for Rude Assignment (1950).[4] The Apes of God, in both structure and subject, is a demonstration of Lewis's growing awareness that, as Blackshirt tells Dan during one of his broadcasts: "Every pastime has its attendant politics."[5] The novel has never been formally responded to as a "political work," but its focus is as political (in Lewis's use of the term) as that of The Art of Being Ruled or Time and Western Man or The Lion and the Fox (1927) (which Lewis, in Rude Assignment, called "my first political book").[6]

There are occasions in Lewis's writings where he attempts to define the word "politics" and the broad application it has for him. Among these are a few brief statements contained in a chapter of Rude Assignment entitled "What are Politics?" Here Lewis states that politics "are what came into our life as soon as we departed from the purely animal condition. Man in society is an animal who is governed."[7] Equally as broad is his definition of politics as "anything to do with that burdensome machinery by means of which man maintains himself as a social being."[8] Politics, for Lewis, has to do with the dynamics of human social interaction on whatever plane it is to be found. It is concerned with the expression of power in government (the acts of ruling and of being ruled) and human conflict or confrontation on various levels other than those that concern the state. "What are politics," he wrote in Anglosaxony (1941), "but the social system contrived by some community, or polis, to regulate the relations of the individual citizens composing it. . . ."[9] Thus he speaks of the politics of class, of age, of sex, or of the intellect. In each case, he sees clearly defined personal and/or social forces aligned against each other in struggles for ascendancy: one class against another, youth versus age, masculine versus feminine, the one versus the many.

The Apes of God, like so much of Lewis's writing, is, among other things, an instrument of warfare in one of these political struggles. Here one sees the "solitary outlaw,"[10] as Lewis defined himself in The Enemy (1927), taking on a number of the members of what he preferred to call the gangs of literary London. It was in an exposé of one of these literary gangs--the Bloomsburies--that he composed probably his most exhaustive statement on the politics of the artist (equated here with what he calls the politics of the intellect) as he perceived them in 1934, not long after The Apes of God and Satire & Fiction (1930) appeared on the literary scene. These comments--as yet unpublished--are quoted here at some length because of their bearing on the nature of The Apes of God and on the specific focus of this dissertation:

> The politics I am about to canvass is what I have named politics of the intellect. It is the politics of the Republic of Letters. And whatever else may be said against it, there are no Lacarnos or Lausannes in that little universe. It still enjoys practically feudal conditions, of open and unrelieved insecurity. Chronic banditry, baronial dictation, faction-fights, gang and guild mix-ups, piracy and the rest is a matter of routine with it. It does not set much of an example to the ordinary world, why blink the fact! But at least no one with any claim to be an 'artist' is compelled to affect to be anything but a plain thug, a drug-addict, garotter, or cut-purse. Indeed the faintest breath of suspicion breathed however lightly against his bad name is sufficient to compromise him perhaps forever.--So, although there are plenty of good honest wars, there are at least no deadly crusades. No 'war-to-end-war' has blackened the annals of the universe of 'polite letters'. It is a rough world, yes, there's no gainsaying that. But at least it aspires to nothing better. 'Authors' or critics do not get together once a month in a Swiss hotel, with a view to dismounting all their critical batteries, scrapping bomb-carrying Pegasuses, abolishing literary vendettas, or submitting their disputes to arbitration--returning to their respective capitals on each occasion with fat commissions for further armaments, and at least half-a-dozen fresh provocations to war. Let us give the devil his due.
>
> To be perfectly truthful, I do not much relish writing about this sort of politics, either. But I am reluctantly compelled to do so; otherwise I should not be allowed to write books at all--not books like Childermass, Tarr, The Apes of God, The Wild Body, Snooty Baronet. You probably regard this as a sensational overstatement: which only shows how little you understand the world I am writing about, or perhaps how little you want to understand it. No: today your artist has to carry a gun, make no mistake as to that--or at least the most peaceful pen must be adapted for use as a passable javelin. . . . But what will be manifest upon his lips are the harsh accents of party-warfare. The clamour of controversy will echo down his armour-plated pen or rattle in the percussion of his typewriter, hammering away like a machine-gun nest to resist some wholly unprovoked attack. For how can he

> help himself? Before he can retire into a suitable corner to give himself up to contemplation for half-an-hour, he must during at least an hour-and-a-half, occupy himself relentlessly in establishing a clearing around his lonely artist's dwelling.[11]

It was not unusual for Lewis to speak of what he termed "party-warfare" in the realm of art. Nor was it inappropriate or wide of the mark when reviewers of The Apes of God referred to the novel as "bomb." The book was indeed a weapon, its publication an act of aggression and an assertion of independence in the art world of London in the 1920s. Its function was not merely (as roman à clef) to stun or maim Lewis's opposition, however; it was also (through the vehicle of the work's own implied analogy between the politics of art and state) to explore the dynamics of the revolutionary impulse that Lewis recognized as reflected in a parallel way in these two realms that occupied so much of his attention for most of his life.

b. Lewis's "Political Enlightenment"

The Apes of God was composed over a considerable length of time. Fragments of the novel appeared in print as early as February 1924; the first edition was released--finally--in June 1930. Over the intervening years many announcements and advertisements published on broadsheets or dustjackets, or in the form of publisher's notes attending other Lewis works, gave notice of the imminent appearance of the promised work of fiction. The first of these publication announcements accompanied "Mr. Zagreus and the Split-Man" in The Criterion in February 1924: "These few pages with the title 'Mr. Zagreus and the Split-Man' belong to a book which will be finished I hope by next autumn."[12]

One of the most interesting things arising out of this authorial comment--considering the prominent political themes of the completed work--is the fact that Lewis, in projecting the date of completion of the novel as early as the fall of 1924, could not possibly have conceived of the concluding sequence of the novel, which takes place during the General Strike in the spring of 1926. And yet in the introductory gloss printed on the front flap of the dustjacket of the first edition Lewis deliberately places the action of the book firmly in the context of the political upheaval of 1926. The brief commentary which begins: "Apes of God has for its setting London in the months preceding the General Strike (1926)" draws attention to a world which lies beyond the limits of Bloomsbury and Chelsea and throughout the novel remains--for the most part--invisible, seldom as obtrusive even as a backdrop against which the activities of London's ape-world take place. That the apes themselves seem to be oblivious to the specific political climate can be explained by the fact that the majority of them had been drawn--or at least conceived--before the General Strike occurred. Krang, the split-man (who later became Ratner) is described in the February 1924 fragment as "a subordinate character . . . given more development in the book than can be seen in this fragment."[13] Lionel Kein and the Finnian Shaws (initially referred to as the Stillwells) were alluded to in the April 1924 fragment published by Eliot. Both Zagreus, of course, and Daniel Boleyn had been conceived by that early date, and the encyclical, the philosophical appraisal of the post-war bohemia which was to serve as the work's aesthetic manifesto--its subject was the politics of art--had been formulated in what (except for relatively minor alterations) was to be its final form.

It seems to have been months or years after major divisions of the novel had been completed that Lewis, in light of a kind of political awakening he experienced in 1926, placed the core of the book--the narration of Dan's picaresque journey ("its fictional presentation . . . in some respects not unlike Tarr, Mr. Lewis's unforgettable picture of the art-world of Paris")[14]--into what he called a pre-revolutionary climate. The last part of the novel and its companion piece--the prologue--must have been built around the reasonably cohesively-structured narrative middle for the purpose of providing a serious politico-social context for the often frivolous and indeed very often hilarious episodes in Dan's journey.

Lewis's political enlightenment of the mid-twenties was not particularly sudden nor dramatic. By 1925 (the date of the writing of The Art of Being Ruled) he had recognized, as he stated in Rude Assignment, "that a great revolution was underway; that an entirely new epoch had begun, for England and for the world."[15] But politics, he said in Blasting & Bombardiering (1939) began for him "in earnest" in 1926.[16] Fascinated and "amused by the spectacle" of the "demise of a society, of an ethos,"[17] he came to see his moderately privileged apes as representative members of a society that was having premonitions of its end: "Mortification already set in at the edges," he later wrote, recalling his post-war sentiments in Rude Assignment. "They began to stink. I have recorded that stink."[18] Describing The Apes of God as "my solitary book of Satire" earlier in the same volume of his autobiography, he had written: "If anyone smarted because of [The Apes of God] . . . they smarted for a political reason. As a class, they had outstayed their usefulness and had grown to be preposterous parasites."[19]

The year 1926 marked, for Lewis, the end of an era. He could see then that the decay and defeat of the post-war was to have lasting sociological, political, economic, and artistic effects. The rather absurd world he had depicted as a cultural wasteland was altered in his perception in the context of social unrest and the beginning of what he later called the "economic ice-age."[20] Along with the birth of Lewis's political consciousness came the awareness that the inane bohemia he had begun to satirize was a rather significant pre-revolutionary condition, a disease; and the grotesquely travestied apes were bacteria contributing to the cultural, political, and social decay. Lewis much later, commenting on his satiric method and on the manner in which his bohemia--a kind of artistic underworld--was related to the significant social malaise of the day, wrote:

> All that was required for my purpose was a grouping of typical people, belonging to the lower fringes of Society. You may compare the Satirist to the Doctor in a French Colony, stealing up behind the native, and plunging his hypodermic into his arm. And the characters in my book are creatures of the blood stream more than anything else. I handled my hypodermic. Each selected, enormously enlarged bacillus has been extracted to play his part upon the written page.[21]

In the same passage, Lewis went on to refer to himself as a "social historian" engaged in a "clinical survey" of the destructive forces at work in "the shell-shaken society of the 'Twenties."[22]

When Lewis began The Apes of God, he could not have known of the General Strike, but he was sensitive enough to the social, political, and artistic climates (and the degree to which these intersected) that he was able to extract out of the artistic world around him images that anticipated the coming social revolution. The apes he portrayed in his novel, in other words, were not merely imitators of the God-like artist. In their attitudes and assumptions they aped or reflected the primary tendencies of the day. The political dynamics of their world, as Lewis presents them, are analogous to those of the social organism as a whole. Indeed, Lewis could not have known about the General Strike before the spring of 1926, but he seems to have sensed, in the years immediately before his "political enlightenment," its inevitability.

2. THE ROMAN A CLEF

When first I (as too hearty and low-bred a stranger arriving from the african Veldt) came among this glittering crowd--Val's Youngers and Betters (those way-up of course--rich, with the iron of Lesbos and of Sodom in the soul from birth--not brought in, in upstart fashion, later in life) there was one thing that used to astonish me. It was this.--Something disobliging _said_ about them in conversation would enrage, I discovered--whereas the same things to the letter, _written_ about them in a book, that would cause them the keenest satisfaction! But how was this? It puzzled me at the start extremely.

Before long I found out, however, that there was a perfectly sound explanation, if you cared to look for it. They were so inordinately vain, or loved publicity with such a startling passion, that there was literally nothing you might not write about them in a book or newspaper. That was the fact of the matter. Afterwards I made the fullest use of this paradoxical _carte blanche_.

So where at first I had hesitated to avail myself of the living model, for my specimen cases (in connection with my field-work in animal psychology) later on I freely drew upon conspicuous people. And I must say I have invariably found them grateful and highly flattered, whatever it might be my painful duty to say about them. They would be disappointed, even, if you depicted them in an agreeable light, for they know only too well that then no one would read the book.

--Wyndham Lewis, _Snooty Baronet_ (1932)

a. The Game of "Who is Who"

When distraught friends and enemies accused Aldous Huxley of creating caricatures of living persons in his fiction, the author proclaimed his innocence and maintained that he wrote with good intentions. Huxley, who depicted in his novels of the twenties a world not unlike the one Wyndham Lewis satirized in *The Apes of God*, found these reproaches on the subject of character-identification "trivial and beside the point," according to his biographer, Sybille Bedford:

> He felt that this whole process of writing, this process of transposing life and fiction is far from wholly conscious and a good deal more obscure and complex than putting Jack Robinson or D. H. Lawrence into a book.[1]

In an attempt to explain how Huxley's peculiar method of creating literary characters inevitably resulted in the transposition of some familiar faces and gestures into his fiction, Bedford continues:

> It might be true to say that Aldous himself did not so much put 'real characters' into his books as use two or three striking aspects of one as a starting point. A novelist may be propelled originally by a face, a voice, a mannerism, a psychological situation or a place, but as he goes on something else takes over. . . .[H]e will leave out, add, develop, change. . . .
>
> He had a habit of mixing up his starting points--one man's philosophy, another's sexual tastes, one trait from a member of his family, another from a character in history--and as he did not like to stop and think that any particular person might recognize fragments of himself in an otherwise outrageous context, he took little trouble to cover up his traces.[2]

Despite frequent pleas of his own good intentions, Huxley continued to suffer the accusations of friends, as well as literary critics, who found portraits of themselves and others in his work. *Point Counter Point* (1928) has been said to have characters modelled on Middleton

Murray (Burlap), D. H. Lawrence (Mark Rampion), Oswald Mosley (Everard Webley), Baudelaire (Spandrell), as well as Huxley himself (Walter Bidlake, and especially Philip Quarles). The identification of "originals" in Crome Yellow (1921) was particularly troublesome. Ottoline Morrell, much to her dismay, found herself to be a favourite model for the novelists whom she so frequently entertained at her elegant Tudor house in Oxfordshire. She did not spare Huxley her expression of indignation when she recognized herself as the original of Crome's Priscilla Wimbush. Sybille Bedford describes Lady Ottoline's response to the novel:

> Lady Ottoline was offended by Crome Yellow and a breach ensued that lasted many years. Aldous and Maria were distressed, and Aldous genuinely surprised. If the setting of the novel, the country house party, was very much based on Garsington, was not this if anything a rather elegant homage to his hosts?. . . And if people, a handful of people, saw Henry Wimbush as Philip Morrell, was this not again a compliment as he is made the author of that moving pastiche, the Dwarfs' Story? And if they thought they recognized a bit of Bertie Russell in Mr. Scogan, a bit of Mark Gertler in the painter, and Evan Morgan (or was it Koteliansky?) in the pianist, if they said that Anne made them think of Carrington (or Maria Nys), Jenny of Brett, and Mary of Maria (or of Carrington), surely then people must also see that all these were conceived in a spirit of light-hearted comedy and that their absurdities did not belong to life and dreary Realismus, but to a summer's masque? Aldous was puzzled and tried to explain in letters. The Morrells remained offended.[3]

The growing tendency of early twentieth-century English writers to create portraits of their contemporaries in fiction seems to have been caused by certain conditions which were dominant in the literary world of England during the inter-war period. It was an era when novelists began to focus increasingly upon the workings of inner character; a period when the art of autobiography was practiced by great numbers of people associated with the arts; a world where both the literary and social lives of artists were to a large degree dominated by coteries, which were prominent in both these worlds simultaneously; and a literary atmosphere where Marcel Proust, whom Wyndham Lewis called "the high-priest of Gossip" (Apes, 265/278), was worshipped as the author of the great roman à clef, Remembrance of Things Past (1913-1927). In the era defined by these influences and manifestations, it was almost inevitable that many London authors would have accepted the people and events around them as material suitable for treatment in fictional form. Indeed, the practice of creating fictional characters of one's friends and enemies became so popular that in numerous instances the novel itself grew to be a kind of gossip-sheet, as Lewis suggests in the chapter of The Apes of God entitled "Chez Lionel Kein Esq." Here Zagreus, broadcasting Pierpoint to his hosts, the Keins, exclaims (on the subject of fiction):

> 'In its more high-brow forms it is in fact the private news-sheet, the big "Gossip"-book--the expansion of a Society newspaper-paragraph--of the Reigning Order. And the Reigning Order is the people with the pelf and the circle of those they patronize, and today it is the High Bohemia of the Ritzes and Rivieras. And the "great novels" of this time are dramatised social news-sheets of that particular Social World.' (Apes, 262/275)

Especially apparent during the inter-war years was the propensity for readers of novels to recognize themselves--and others--in the fiction of their time. Jerome Meckier, in his study of the novels of Huxley, describes the period as:

> an era of personal satire in which novelists inserted themselves and their friends into their novels with a gleeful vehemence unseen in England since the Augustan age and the Dunciad of Pope. From D. H. Lawrence's Women in Love (1920) and Aaron's Rod (1922)

> through Those Barren Leaves (1925), Point Counter Point (1928), and the writings of Wyndham Lewis, to Somerset Maugham's Cakes and Ale (1930), no writer's person or theories were safe from the malicious enthusiasm of his fellows.[4]

The writing of novels that could be called romans à clef was a practice that in some cases could have had, and did have, special efficacy for the writer during the early modern period. That is, the novelist who wished to flatter his contemporaries, to expose them, or make them appear ridiculous, could depict their likenesses in fiction and expect that the reading public would anticipate his action and be sensitive to his clues. The same gossip-minded audience on whom the writer of the roman à clef relied could, however, create endless problems for the writer whose methods were such that he simply happened continuously to draw into his novels details relating to persons and events that made up his environment.

The process of portrayal and identification could take place on any of several planes. An individual was most often "recognized" in the novel of a contemporary, however, because of apparent similarities between his physical appearance, habits,and thought and that of the character who was said to have been modelled on him. The clues upon which identifications were based were often slight and superficial; there was inevitably, as a result, some disagreement among writers, models, and readers about who was actually who. The problem of identification raised by the gossip-column fiction is well articulated by the following examples of critical responses to Huxley's Crome Yellow. While Jerome Meckier states that "H. G. Wells appears as Mr. Scogan in Crome Yellow,"[5] Peter Firchow indicates that T. S. Eliot identified Scogan (in the margin of his copy of the novel) as

"'Russell' (presumably Bertrand)."[6] Firchow, in a footnote, repeats Ronald Clark's assertion in The Huxleys (1968) that Russell himself perceived that he had been the model for this character, and that he objected to the fact that Scogan was made "'to put forward seriously the very ideas which he, Russell, had discussed as a joke at one of Lady Ottoline's house-parties.'"[7] The question of who the real-life Scogan could have been is further obscured by the fact that Huxley himself, in an interview published in the Paris Review, "stated that Scogan's character was based on Norman Douglas."[8] Similarly, Priscilla Wimbush was identified by Eliot as Lady Ida Sitwell,[9] while Michael Holroyd, Peter Quennell, and Sybille Bedford assumed that she was a fictional portrait of Ottoline Morrell.[10] Crome itself is assumed by Holroyd, Quennell, and others to be modelled on Lady Ottoline's Garsington Manor, yet L. P. Hartley, "who recalls paying his first visit to Lady Ottoline's in the company of Huxley,"[11] identifies Crome's original as Beckley Park, another Oxfordshire mansion.

As T. S. Eliot's own scribbled annotations (identifying Crome Yellow's Denis as Huxley, Scogan as Russell, Gombauld as Mark Gertler and Henry Wimbush as Sir Philip Morrell)[12] would suggest, the examining of newly-published novels for familiar physical forms, and personal gestures and thoughts, became a kind of pastime. As a result, writers who claimed never to have planned to create works of fiction that could be classified as romans à clef found themselves having to compose letters of explanation and apology in which they pleaded their innocence or asked their readers to understand that they never had intended that such-and-such a character should bear so striking a resemblance to so-and-so. Consider, for example, the case of D. H. Lawrence and Women in Love. The novel, according to Harry T. Moore, the editor of Lawrence's letters, "waited several years for a publisher to accept it . . . partly due to Lady Ottoline Morrell's objection to the portrait of her in the book."[13] Lawrence, utterly frustrated by the wealthy society hostess's response to what she perceived to be her caricature in the character Hermione Roddice, wrote J. B. Pinker in February 1917:

> Really, the world has gone completely dotty! Hermione is not much more like Ottoline Morrell than Queen Victoria, the house they claim as theirs is a Georgian house in Derbyshire I know very well--etc. Ottoline flatters herself. There is a hint of her in the character of Hermione: but so there is a hint of a million women, if it comes to that.
>
> Anyway, they could make libel cases for ever, they haven't half a leg to stand on.[14]

Presumably Lady Ottoline did threaten libel action against Lawrence over several months, for in April 1917 the author wrote an impatient letter to the painter, Mark Gertler:

> please tell me how much likeness you can see between Hermione and the Ott. The Ott. is really too disgusting, with her threat of legal proceedings, etc. She is really contemptible. We have flattered her above all bounds, in attending to her at all.[15]

Women in Love finally did appear without Lady Ottoline's having taken action against it, and, furthermore, according to Moore, Lawrence and "the Ott." became friends again in 1928. The renewed acquaintance did not, however, prevent Lady Ottoline from expressing in a letter in 1932 (after Lawrence's death) that Women in Love was "'horrible . . . a wicked chaotic spiteful book.'"[16]

The game of "who-is-who in literature" seemed eventually to reach rather absurd proportions. Not only did the novel become potentially a weapon to be feared by those who could be made the targets of satire, but the novelist himself became almost arbitrarily the subject of legal actions on the often tenuous grounds that literary resemblance could be proven, and further, that it could be interpreted as slander.

A measure of at least one contemporary author's frustration with the state of affairs is provided in the half-serious, ultimately humorous prefatory note to Osbert Sitwell's Those Were The Days (1938). Sitwell had lost a suit against a Mrs. A. Courtenay-Welch--and paid substantial damages--when she successfully accused him of having caricatured herself and her son in a short story entitled "Happy Endings" (which was published in the collection, Dumb-Animal, and Other Stories (1930)). The following notice, which appears near the beginning of Sitwell's Those Were The Days, and the sentiment expressed therein, was undoubtedly precipitated by the Courtenay-Welch proceedings:

> All characters in this book are the invention and property of the author. Any person attempting to force an entrance by recognising himself will be sued for trespass.
>
> By Order[17]

The experiences of Huxley, along with others like Lawrence and Osbert Sitwell, were far from being isolated events in the literary history of England in the early decades of this century. Indeed, the London literary establishment, at the time that Lewis's gigantic satire, The Apes of God, appeared, was very well conditioned to respond with an emotion akin either to delight or indignation when a new novel, potentially a roman à clef, was published. Therefore, while Lewis's attack in The Apes of God was--characteristically--a blow that tended to overwhelm, the mere fact of its appearance would not have been particularly shocking. Furthermore, acknowledgement that Lewis, insofar as his novel is a roman à clef, was playing by the established rules of the game is provided by the matter-of-fact tone of Edith Sitwell's statement to Lady Snow, in a letter dated 8 January 1959:

> I figured as Lady Harriet in his The Apes of God. (And he figured as Mr Henry Debringham in the only novel I have ever written, I Live Under a Black Sun. . . .)18

Wyndham Lewis, with the publication of The Apes of God, placed himself--in a sensational way and for some time--in the centre of the world of gossip-column fiction.

* * *

The term "roman à clef," literally translated, means "novel with a key." The German "Schlüsselliteratur" means essentially the same thing. The roman à clef is defined in various literary handbooks as a fictional narrative in which characters or actions can be recognized and identified as actual characters and events by a relatively well-informed reader. The label itself implies that it is this identification--the eventual provision of a "key"--that is central to the understanding of what the work is about. Indeed, some early French examples of the sub-genre were accompanied by "keys" that were generally issued some time after the publication of the major work.

Persistent concentration exclusively on the question of who is who--whether or not the author himself declares the question to be relevant or irrelevant--can and does tend to obscure what may very well be the primary issues in a narrative work. In other words, it can be misleading for the reader to assume that a roman à clef is merely a novel with a key--or a novel that requires a key--and little more. Contemporary readers, especially, seem to have difficulty seeing beyond parallels in portraiture and incident.

The only full-length critical attempt to come to terms with the nature and theory of the livre à clef is Georg Schneider's three-volume study, Die Schlüsselliteratur (1951). Schneider defines "key-literature" as "ein Schrifttum, das . . . Vorgänge and Gestalten der Wirklichkeit unter erdichteten Namen wiedergibt, das mithin der Spannung nicht entbehrt und den Spürsinn anregt."[19] Schneider's definition is significant in that it points to the fact that the peculiar elements that make a novel a roman à clef do not, ideally, detract from the work as an essentially fictional narrative. Familiar events and physical manifestations stimulate the reader's "Spürsinn" (feelings, mind), but only to the extent that he says to himself, "this is reminiscent of so-and-so."

The roman à clef does not function the way that allegory functions: that is, it does not make use of a tightly-structured system of parallels. Rather, as Schneider suggests, fragmentary and most-times inconsistent hints tend to evoke responses in the contemporary reader, provided he is somewhat familiar with the world from which the fictionist draws his material. The further away the reader is from the people, places, events, and sensibilities of the novelist's immediate milieu, the greater the difficulty he experiences not only in identifying the real-life counterparts of the writer's inventions, but also in defining the background of relationships and events that precipitated the writing of the livre à clef in the first place.

b. Not Merely Gossip-column Fiction

Some years after the fuss over The Apes of God had dissipated, Ezra Pound, lamenting the fact that the contemporary critical reception of the novel had allowed a disproportionate emphasis to be placed on the game of "who is who," suggested that the work would be recognized for its greatness only once no one was any longer capable of identifying any of its originals, or as Pound called them, "un-originals":

> The chippchipp about identification of the 'characters' with living unoriginals is of featherweight non-importance. In eighty years no one will care a kuss whether Mr. X Y or Z. of the book was 'taken from' Mssrs. Puffun, Guffin or Mungo. The colossal masks will remain with the fixed grins of colossi.[20]

What Pound objected to was the fact that so many contemporary readers seemed to regard the novel only in terms of their own or their associates' personal investments in the work. Pound reacted to the highly-charged emotional environment the novel had evoked in 1930 and in which it had been submerged for so long.

Certainly most contemporary critics of The Apes of God were content to see the novel merely as a sensational roman à clef and felt little compulsion to look past its immediately-apprehended surface. Frank Swinnerton, writing in The Evening News, went so far as to regret that he could not say what the book was all about:

> for I have not the key. . . . I assume that there are many portraits in his book, but they are portraits, for the most part, of those whom I do not know. . . . I should have preferred . . . less mysteriousness in the matter of identification.[21]

Excerpts from Swinnerton's and others' reviews were reprinted in Lewis's own Satire & Fiction. Over and over again the impulse to dismiss the novel as an example simply of one side of several violent, personally-directed literary feuds is evident. J. D. Beresford wrote:

> I am not surprised to hear that Wyndham Lewis's 'Apes of God' has aroused resentment in various quarters. . . .[If] any further proof were needed of Mr. Wyndham Lewis's drastic satire being securely founded upon facts, however unpleasant they may be, that proof is brilliantly furnished by the indignation with which his last book has been received.[22]

Indeed, indignation seemed to be almost the order of the day. John Grosvenor reported, in The Weekly Dispatch, that:

> Mr. Lewis has written of at least one living person, describing well the character of a rich man who is a connoisseur of pictures, only very thinly disguising his name. So this man, in revenge, put an advertisement in the Personal Column to the effect that he 'had a number of Mr. Lewis's pictures for sale cheap.'[23]

Montagu Slater, in The Daily Telegraph, reported that "Mr. Osbert Sitwell, Mr. Aldous Huxley, Mr. Norman Douglas have armed themselves with whips and scorpions."[24]

Augustus John, demonstrating his awareness of the novel's suffering from the indignation of powerful figures in the literary world, wrote to Lewis:

> In your Apes of God you have, as it were, suspended upon magical wires colossal puppets, whose enlarged and distorted features may be attributed to those of not a few contemporary figures known to fame, infamy and myself. Some of these you, from your own superabundance, have endowed with unexpected intelligence; others, by an ingenious operation of trepanning, you have bereft of what wits they had or could lay claim to. . . . Your readers and especially, I feel, your subjects, must be compelled, before the work of criticism begin, to salute with a wide and comprehensive flourish the lofty genius of the author.[25]

Lewis's The Apes of God is, as the early reviewers so eagerly acknowledged, a roman à clef; it is also, however, a penetrating commentary on an age. Even in this novel, the author was at least as concerned about exposing trends or implied threats which adversely affected the state of the arts, and society in general, as he was in taking what he must have known were ultimately ineffectual swipes at individuals. One need only consider the primary intellectual thrust of productions such as Blast (1914; 1915), Time and Western Man, and The Art of Being Ruled to recognize that Lewis was generally more concerned with the implications of contemporary phenomena, however manifest, than he was with the isolated actions or statements of individuals. It was his own self-conscious cognizance of his ultimate purpose or intention which allowed him to write chapters harshly criticizing the work (or, more precisely, the implications of the work) of people like Pound, Joyce, and Stein while acknowledging and admiring the genius of the work's creator. Lewis tended to personify what he perceived to be dangerous contemporary phenomena. Moreover, he personified them by identifying them with specific individuals who seemed to him to be representative examples or symptoms of what he wished to expose. So Pound became the revolutionary simpleton, and Joyce and Stein became the purveyors and popularizers of Bergsonian time-philosophy. It is not surprising that Lewis's penchant for identifying contemporary socio-cultural symptoms with actual people should be more fully realized in what must be one of the most natural expressions of this tendency: the roman à clef.

Implied in the above assessment is an interpretive statement which defines specifically the nature of Lewis's intentions when he set out to write The Apes of God: he directed his attacks at individuals whom he saw both as people and as symptoms or manifestations of social and cultural decay. These two thrusts themselves did not function independently of each other, for each individual Lewis attacked was one whom he perceived to be the most representative symptom of an ailment he was attempting to expose and eradicate.[26] His intentions, then, were multiple, but not divergent.

For Lewis to speak of symptoms and tendencies was for him to strike at the heart of much that he ever wrote about. Though in art he worked in terms of his own precisely defined "doctrine of the great without," the outside that he saw and painted and wrote about was generally an iconographic one. Just as Lewis projected complex meanings via his descriptions of "the outside," his own perceptions of the surface manifestations in contemporary art, literature, politics, and social life implied--for him--an attempt to read what became in his eyes the iconographic symbols of an age. The Apes of God is like The Lion and the Fox, The Art of Being Ruled, and Time and Western Man insofar as it is one of a series of works in which Lewis provided his own highly personalized interpretation of these contemporary icons.

What is required in order for The Apes of God to be appreciatively received and more reasonably understood is not the fading of the content of contemporary memories, but merely the displacement of the intensely personal involvements which tended in the past to cloud the reader's perceptions of the work. If today's reader of The Apes of God takes seriously the "manifesto" about gossip-column fiction contained in the novel itself, he will likely find information related to the identity of the novel's originals useful to his understanding of the work. Furthermore, if he accepts the notion that

Lewis's statements about Lytton Strachey or the Sitwells, for example, are as significant to an understanding of The Apes of God as his statements about Pound and Stein are to the comprehension of what the author was saying in Time and Western Man, he will allow that the roman à clef, in its various applications in the novel, is a significant feature of the work.

3. WYNDHAM LEWIS AS PAMPHLETEER

Mr. Lewis speedily discovered, at the outset of his career, that, as he was not a rich man, it was not enough to be an artist. The artist would merely be preyed upon and vilified--and the better the artist the more true that would be--were there not a fairly competent pamphleteer there to defend him. So, Mr. Lewis became a pamphleteer as well as an artist. That is the history of that.

--Wyndham Lewis, Satire & Fiction (1930)

a. Prospectus, Pamphlet and Broadsheet

The Arthur Press issued an advertisement to announce the near-completion of The Apes of God in 1929.[1] The single-leaf circular (folded to make four pages) had an order form on the one side and descriptive remarks (presumably written by Lewis) about the novel on the other. While the date for publication of the book had not yet been established, the notice included a statement that gave the anticipated time of readiness as the end of October. The novel appeared in June 1930.

It was from the 750-word gloss that occupies the internal two pages of the advertisement that Lewis excerpted the material for the blurb on the dust-wrapper of the first edition of The Apes of God. In the original prospectus from which this material was later drawn, he delineates the manner in which his forthcoming novel is an extension of his previous work, both fiction and non-fiction. He sees The Apes of God, for example, as a novel of manners which completes a social portrait already begun in Tarr (1918; 1928):

> This sardonic account of London life to-day is the first book of fiction which Mr. Lewis has produced since his unforgettable picture of the Paris art-world in Tarr. The extraordinary promise of that novel of *moeurs* is now splendidly fulfilled in the Apes of God.[2]

Moreover, Lewis states matter-of-factly that the *material* of his new fictional work incorporates concepts and theories which he had already expressed in another form, in another way. He points to the *dramatis personae* in the novel for illustration:

> They are seen immersed in the make-believe of the adult nursery described in 'The Art of Being Ruled' . . . . Mr. Wyndham Lewis has discussed these problems

> in his great pamphlets and books of fiery controversy; but this is the first time that he has used them as material for his art as a novelist. . . .
>
> For those people inclined to regard such a book as Time and Western Man as a philosophical treatise 'above their heads', or who were dismayed by the supernatural splendours and difficulties of 'Childermass: Part I.', here is the stuff of everyday, throbbing with dramatic life, of which those works were abstractions or sublimations.

He continues:

> Daniel Boleyn, the young hero of the Apes of God, is, to quote from a descriptive note by Mr. Lewis, 'a latter-day metropolitan shepherd, fashioned in quicksilver, who melts into shining tears at a touch': Mr. Horace Zagreus sentimentally pursues such embodiments of 'genius', with eyes that never may be wholly unsealed, longing for a world that is no longer there: drenched with drugs, Mélanie, the wealthy, mock-Irish, 'intellectuelle,' disputes this human prize with her old friend Horace: in the end the young 'genius' remains in her hands--Horace Zagreus discovers another. These figures, once you have met them in the pages of Mr. Lewis's book, you will find as difficult to forget as any in imaginative literature.[3]

Lewis stated, on various occasions, that a work like The Apes of God must be not only written but also explained and defended. In an unpublished foreword to a cheap edition of the novel, he wrote:

> We cannot thank our stars enough that Mr. Wyndham Lewis, the creative artist--the author of Tarr, The Wild Body, The Childermass, The Apes of God--has a double. That double is Mr. Wyndham Lewis, the pamphleteer. That literary gladiator is always at the elbow of the artist who created the colossal pictures of The Apes of God. No work of the latter can ever be attacked with impunity! That is a most fortunate circumstance.[4]

The prospectus of the novel issued by the Arthur Press is not only the first relatively extensive authorial statement about The Apes of God, but also the only available commentary about this controversial work to appear prior to the novel's dramatic debut. Lewis was to have much more opportunity to function as pamphleteer once the book actually appeared.

* * *

There is no indication that Wyndham Lewis anticipated the violent wave of furious indignation that The Apes of God was to arouse among some segments of the reading public, in spite of the fact that he drew public attention (in the prospectus discussed directly above) to the fact that he was "one of the most remarkable . . . controversialists of the day."[5] Still, he must have known that there would be some strong negative reactions to the novel, considering that he had already been forewarned by the responses of several individuals to the segments of The Apes of God which had appeared in the Criterion in 1924.

When the negative reactions did surface, Lewis the pamphleteer did not appear to be unprepared. He wasted little time gathering the necessary materials for his own counter-reaction. The Apes of God was followed, shortly, by Satire & Fiction, prompted in part by the New Statesman's rejection of Roy Campbell's review of the novel. Campbell, who had reviewed some of Lewis's work during his several years of writing for the New Statesman, had been commissioned by Clifford Sharp, the editor of that publication, to write a review of the book. By chance, when Campbell sent in his completed essay, it was received not by Sharp, who was on leave, but by R. Ellis Roberts, who had become responsible for the literary part of the paper. Roberts responded to Campbell, stating:

> I am afraid I cannot publish your review as it stands, even over your signature. I find you take a far more serious view of its merits than I can, and indeed take Mr. Lewis altogether more seriously than I think is justifiable. . . .[W]ould you have any objection to my

> publishing the review--unsigned of course--with such modifications as I think good?[6]

Campbell was enraged by Roberts' rejection and appalled by his suggestion of changes. He wrote to Lewis from Martigues,[7] informing him of his intention to publish a pamphlet entitled A Rejected Review. Lewis asked him to publish the material in Satire & Fiction, Enemy Pamphlet No. 1, instead. So Campbell's story, with accompanying documents, appeared there under the sub-title, "The History of a Rejected Review by Roy Campbell." The heading "Scandal of an Attempt to Sabotage a Great Work of Art!" was included on the cover and the theme of sabotage and literary boycott figured prominently inside.

That The Apes of God did indeed suffer a kind of critical boycott, as was suggested in Satire & Fiction, was not entirely a misconception on Lewis's part. Shane Leslie, an Irish Catholic writer who informed the author that he was very much impressed by the novel, wrote to A. J. A. Symons in November 1930, indicating that he had been unable to get permission to review the book for any periodical.[8] Lewis blamed the "embargo" on the control and influence of Bloomsbury and Chelso-Bloomsbury, noting that one of the "best-known Sunday papers"--which happened to have a "prominent Bloomsbury" as its literary editor--had failed to mention The Apes of God weeks after the book's publication. "If that silence is ever broken," Lewis wrote, "it will be broken by a roar or sneer of hatred, or by a sly Bloomsbury sniff."[9]

While, as Lewis stated in a letter to Richard Aldington, dated 30 July 1930,"[t]he agony-column of the Times has echoed the rage of people who considered themselves attacked in the Apes,"[10] the Bloomsburies themselves generally assumed a posture of silence in response to Lewis's attack on the Bloomsbury-type dilettante in the novel. Lewis, they decided, was best dealt with by being ignored. And the Bloomsburies had enough influence in literary circles to make a silent rebuff of Lewis a significant gesture. Lewis himself, on the other hand, by aligning in Satire & Fiction the New Statesman rebuff with the Bloomsbury "sniff" was able to make both parties of his enemies appear fairly unjust in their dealings with him. Douglas Goldring, whose response to the whole fiasco is a product of first-hand experience, recalls the Roberts episode in his book The Nineteen Twenties (1945):

> A terrific row blew up, which kept literary London entertained for weeks, and the unfortunate Mr. Roberts soon found himself immortalized as the king of ape-critics. It was a head-on collision between two acknowledged leaders of the literary avant-garde (Lewis and Campbell) and the powerful forces of what Ford Madox Ford used to call The Establishment. On the whole, without unfairness to Mr. Roberts, I think it can be said that Wyndham Lewis and Roy Campbell had the best of it.[11]

* * *

Lewis evidently wanted to make the most of his opportunities to advertise his new novel in the summer of 1930, for he continued to produce auxiliary publications outlining the events surrounding the novel's reception. The general emotional tone of Lewis's own call to arms is conveyed in a letter he sent in July to Richard Aldington, who had responded at length--and generally positively--to The Apes of God in two consecutive articles in The Referee. The missive, which demonstrates Lewis's sincere gratefulness toward Aldington for his reviews, reveals also a self-indulgent expression of humour directed at the great flurry of activity occasioned by the publication of the novel:

> The *Apes* has caused here in London a good deal of disturbance. My life has been threatened by an airman, even! . . . .[T]he letter I enclose will indicate that now a counter attack is about to begin. I am admirably armed--with other makes of gun this time, besides the 'Lewis gun'. . . .[12]

The letter enclosure to which Lewis refers is still another circular or "round robin" which was sent out by the Arthur Press in the summer of 1930. A copy of *The Apes of God* accompanied the circular which itself concluded with a request for expressed opinions about the novel--statements that could be used in its defence:

> *The Apes of God* should, in order to reach the general reading public of England and America, not present itself, perhaps, with its detractors unanswered--the rage that it aroused allowed to have the last word.[13]

In anticipation of the appearance of *Satire & Fiction*, Lewis issued a window broad-sheet[14] which, with its liberal use of bold-face type, is reminiscent of *Blast*. A self-portrait of Lewis, eyes glaring forth from behind spectacles and beneath a broad-rimmed hat, is set to the right of: "Buy *The Apes of God* and see for yourself what all this is about!" What follows is printed in upper-case letters, the type ranging from one-eighth to five-eighths inches in height. Lewis projects a "Chorus of Apes of God (off stage)":

> 'MR. WYNDHAM LEWIS
> *MUST NOT* WRITE NOVELS!
> *WE WILL NOT ALLOW*
> MR. WYNDHAM LEWIS TO
> WRITE FICTION! NOT FICTION!
> MR. WYNDHAM LEWIS NEED NOT THINK
> THAT HE CAN WRITE WICKED STORIES
> ALL ABOUT US FOR HE CAN'T--
>
> SO THERE!
>
> WE DON'T WANT TO FIGHT MR. WYNDHAM
> LEWIS BUT BY JINGO IF WE DO--
> WE'VE GOT THE INK, WE'VE GOT THE PEN,

> WE'VE GOT THE PAPER TOO!!!
> *AND* WE'LL PUT A FEW LITTLE REVIEWS ON
> FOOT THAT WILL PUT MR. WYNDHAM LEWIS'S NOSE
> OUT OF JOINT--WE'VE GOT THE MONEY
> TOO!
>
> NO--A THOUSAND TIMES NO NO NO!
> MR. WYNDHAM LEWIS *SHALL NOT* PAINT
> US WITH HIS FICTION-PEN! NO!
> *IF* MR. W. L. LIKES HE CAN WRITE AS MUCH AS
> HE WANTS ABOUT OUR *POEMS* OH YES--OR
> ABOUT OUR *PICTURES* CERTAINLY--BUT HE
> *SHALL NOT* WRITE ABOUT US!
>
> SO THERE!'[15]

Carried away with fun, Lewis quotes "Extracts from some notices of *The Apes of God*." Among the reviewing papers are "The Simian Sentinel," "The Literary Gazette of the Simiadae," "The Nation of the Simiadae," and "The Weekly Blurb," from which the following excerpt is taken: "Mr. Lewis has failed utterly--he has *no idea* what WE are like! Read *our* books--do not read HIS!"

The effect of all Lewis's pamphleteering was to draw attention to his new work and to do so in the context of creating an *event* that became the subject of heated discussion which would keep him and his work in the public eye for some time. Many years later, Lewis reflected in a letter about *The Apes of God*, which he called his "250 thousand word book of satire." It was with some degree of satisfaction that he was then able to say that this novel played a significant role in making his life one which, he said, "positively seethed with and abounded in controversy."[16]

* * *

The Apes of God was not, of course, solely responsible for the dominant role of controversy in Lewis's life. By the time the novel appeared, the English public already had been predisposed to perceive

Lewis as an exceptionally energetic force which (especially to those who found themselves or their ideas vulnerable to his attacks) appeared to explode, many thought, much too frequently. Geoffrey Grigson, a younger contemporary of Lewis, begins his pamphlet entitled A Master of Our Time: A Study of Wyndham Lewis (1951) with a statement which describes the impact Lewis had on him in the twenties:

> Wyndham Lewis, twenty-five years ago, was more than any other English writer the symbol of energy and acuteness, of the controlled explosion and the steel edge. We who were then young were amazed by his armament. Here was inertia's opposite.[17]

Ezra Pound, who accompanied Lewis through his first public "explosion," the Blast period, recalled in The Criterion in 1937 Lewis's public image, and at the same time, like Grigson, provided a corrective for the generally-accepted notion that Lewis's attacks were launched and directed arbitrarily:

> The whole public and even those of us who then knew him best, have been so befuddled with the concept of Lewis as EXPLOSIVE that scarcely anyone has had the sense or the patience to look calmly at his perfectly equanimous suave and equipoised observations of letters. The difference between a gun and a tree is a difference of tempo. The tree explodes every spring.[18]

Lewis's explosions prior to The Apes of God controversy could be identified primarily with the emergence of his two appropriately named periodicals--Blast (1914, 1915) and The Enemy (1927, 1929). While the editor of Blast, Lewis became "extremely well-known," as he has stated in Blasting & Bombardiering:

> I can remember no specific morning upon which I awoke and found that this had happened. But by August 1914 no newspaper was complete without news about 'vorticism' and its arch-exponent Mr. Lewis.[19]

Lewis's personal identity was inextricably interwoven with his pose as art-politician prior to World War I. While Vorticism, a formal appellation for the impulse behind Blast, was at least on one level a serious gesture having to do with the status of art in England, the movement and its leaders were self-consciously aware of the theatrics that were necessary before the movement would get a significant amount of publicity. With a tone that reveals his relishing, in retrospect, of the then easy enjoyment of his role as actor and poseur, Lewis recalled the days before he found it necessary to employ, as a type of metaphorical personal shield, the Enemy Persona:

> The Press in 1914 had no Cinema, no Radio, and no Politics: so the painter could really become a 'star'. There was nothing against it. Anybody could become one, who did anything funny. And Vorticism was replete with humour, of course; it was acclaimed the best joke ever. . . .[N]o illustrated paper worth its salt but carried a photograph of some picture of mine or of my 'school', as I have said, or one of myself, smiling insinuatingly from its pages.[20]

In The Enemy, as in Blast, Lewis examined the forces shaping artistic expression and perception, especially in his own cultural milieu. Already expressing the particular disposition that eventually produced such works as Time and Western Man, The Art of Being Ruled, The Lion and the Fox and The Apes of God in lieu of his long-planned master work "A Man of the World," Lewis described his writings, in The Enemy, as being "devoted to the work of radical analysis of the ideas by which our society has been taught to live."[21] His primary concern was still the survival of art, which he defined unequivocally at the time as "something much more generally important than merely current water-colour paintings or polite fiction. Art at its fullest is a very great force indeed, a magical force, a sort of life, a very great 'reality'."[22]

By the time Lewis brought out The Enemy, his public image was no longer merely that of an amusing curiosity of the pre-war art-movements. In heavy black lettering spread across the top of the cover of The Enemy No. 3, he identified himself with Diogenes--the 4th century B.C. originator and archetype of the sect of the Cynics--who, as legend would have it, lived in a tub. Through the display of his acid wit, Diogenes set out to expose the fraudulent character of the accepted beliefs and standards of his day. Furthermore, he claimed to be a "citizen of the world" in a time when his countrymen defined the good life as being a member of an exclusive community called a polis. Lewis spoke of himself as "the Diogenes of the day," who "sits laughing in the mouth of his tub and pours forth his invective upon all passers-by, irrespective of race, creed, rank or profession, and sex."[23] This was in March 1929, just fifteen months before The Apes of God appeared.

b. An Unpublished Foreword

The first limited edition of The Apes of God was restricted to 750 copies, signed and numbered. The format was large (25.4 x 19.6 cm.). The very bulky tan volume with its off-white dust-jacket designed by Lewis and printed in orange and black sold at a relatively brisk pace for £3/3-. By mid-October 1930, Lewis was able to report to C. H. Prentice at Chatto and Windus that he had, he said,

> made more out of the private edition of the book--and that with the miserable resources at my command--than your firm offered me for the whole lot: and I still have a considerable number of copies to sell (although more than you considered it safe to print as a special edition have already been sold and paid for). . . .[24]

Having recognized the financial success of the first edition, Lewis anticipated the publication of a privately-printed popular edition of the novel. It was to be, he stated in an October 1930 letter to Shane Leslie, a "sort of 'speak-easy' edition," to be published "at once (at the very popular price of 7/-6, so it is certain to reach a great many readers)."[25] As an advertising circular distributed by the Arthur Press indicates, this enterprise was not to have been carried out without the flourish of energy and ingenuity characteristic of Lewis's personal activities:

> We are shortly publishing a popular edition of Mr. Wyndham Lewis's novel, The Apes of God. . . . We are also publishing it with advertisements. The adverts. will not be confined to those of publishers and bookshops. We are including adverts. of Steamship Lines, tooth-pastes, and lawn-mowers.
>
> This will be the first novel since the age of Dickens to carry advertisements. It will be a unique event in the publishing world. It is certain to arouse a great deal of interest and result in a wide publicity. . . .[26]

This singular publishing venture was never brought to fruition;[27] the reasons for its failure are not clear. Lewis's plans were relatively well-developed. He had worked on an introduction to the popular edition--an essay which was both a summation and extension of Satire & Fiction.[28] Available at Cornell, and misleadingly catalogued as a draft of a foreword to Satire & Fiction, the type-script was composed in February 1931. It provides the last significant contemporary authorial comments about The Apes of God, and includes near the end, a statement of motive and intention very different from anything Lewis had previously said about the novel. It begins, however, in a tone which is consistent with Lewis's previous responses to the work:

> This great satirical book called THE APES OF GOD, has 'come-off', as has no prose satire in recent times in England. For 'The Apes of God' is not only, as Mr.

> Roy Campbell describes it, 'a rare and historical event': it has also achieved its ends. It has aroused a storm of indignation. . . .
>
> What makes this achievement particularly striking, however, is that it was accomplished in the teeth of the most determined opposition that any work of satire has ever had to face, in the whole history of English Letters. This Manifesto is the record (in many cases verbatim and day by day) of this most remarkable and instructive literary struggle.[29]

While Lewis's former statements about The Apes of God seem to have been determined largely by external forces which tended to define the novel in a particular manner, his statements in this introduction consist mainly of a series of rare personal reflections that describe the state of mind that gave rise to the creation of the novel.

It is very unusual for Lewis to lay himself open in the way he appears to do here. While he jokes about the "romantic" history of the book, he seems not to attempt to obscure the depth of feeling he experienced following the war--the sorrow and distraction and anger which gave impetus to and finally took shape as The Apes of God. Seemingly aware of the remarkable nature of what he is about to say, he begins:

> The Public will be puzzled to hear what all this is about. The Public will hear, upon the one hand, that the author of this sensation is 'a charlatan' and upon the other that he is a writer worth its attention. But also many reports and misrepresentations will get into circulation. Under these circumstances for once I am compelled to be personal, and to give the Public some notion of what it is that covers this ebullience, what it is beneath the 'hush-hush', and [why] I am at once so famous and so obscure. I cannot of course tell [the] thing in a breath, or in fifteen pages, but I can give them something they will hear in no other way.[30]

As if not knowing quite what sort of context his material requires, Lewis states that while he himself is not a romantic, the history of his novel is "tremendously romantic": "I take no interest in romance. But _if_ I were romantic what a romantic story I could write!"

> To begin then. To choose the age of thirty-three about as is fashionable--the War had just ended, and I was living with the offspring of a jewish fortune-teller who had seduced me, a simple soldier, when I was none too sober, in the Tottenham Court Road. I then was revolving in my mind (you will notice how _romantic_ everything to do with this matter is) a book about the War.
>
> . . . .
>
> [M]y mother died of pneumonia at the tail-end of the Great Epidemic that immediately succeeded the Great War. I had had it. I was in the military Hospital near the Euston Road with double pneumonia for weeks. My mother came there to see me, nodding her head, with her poor tragic face and brought me books. Six months later she was dead. I was distracted at the time by this, the reader may believe me, and that event, for my mother was not an old woman, gave me quite a peculiar feeling about the Great War which I have not noticed in most of the War books, because it had worn her down and killed her: and I swore a vendetta against the authors of that abomination, especially against the Kaiser, of course.
>
> If I lay my heart bare, O Public, it is only in the interest of truth. But the Great War, as you know, not only killed and wasted, and put us all up to our necks in debt to the fine fellows who so generously lent us money to buy the guns and gas to destroy each other--and, if I am not mistaken, will do so again, without too much pressing on our part, indeed may press _us_ to do it again and not to be backward about asking for a bit more if we find we want it--the Great Adventure not only did _that_, it also (as you know) produced a lovely new society of the most brilliant sort, in every capital of Europe. Out of the ruins and corpses crept this curious maggot. And it is certainly an integral part of the War--and certainly a poor fictionist like myself who writes about The Great Peace is no mere scribbling 'civvie' but must be allowed _some_ martial honours, too! Something of the palor of the soldier must adhere to the brow of any writer who _really_ is the chronicler (however humbly) of this Great Peace.
>
> Now I have told you how I came to think of writing a War book, and how the Peace was too young and I was advised against it, but how I had personal reasons, as it were, of my own, for doing so, and how I suppressed (in a sense) all I had to say upon that subject. And now I have to tell you how that terrible _motif_ asserted itself again, gradually, as the Great Peace wore on, and as we all grew accustomed to this new visage, and how I began to scrutinize this face, and thought that after

> all I would write my book upon the Great War, but that I would show it in the mirror of The Peace, better than it could be shown upon the mere field of battle, among such nichtigkeits as shells.
>
> Now it was somewhere in 1923 or 1924 that the thing took shape, and The Apes of God was born. Already the Peace had a hard, old, look, though only four years old. But the War, for that matter, did not attain a greater age than that, and all of us know how aged that thing seemed, before President Wilson brought it to an end, and buried it with great pomp at Versailles, with full military honours--and at Trianon too! So, when the Peace had already got a grown-up and competent look that strongly reminded a few of us of the War, its bloody old Dad, I laid down The Apes, and it was in The Criterion, Mr. Eliot's paper, that it first appeared. And in 1924, April, The Apes of God was the title of the encyclical of Mr. Zagreus that found its way into the pages of The Criterion.[31]

These remarks remained unpublished along with Lewis's proposed popular edition and it was not until 1954, when Lewis prepared the introduction for the twenty-fifth anniversary edition of the work, that the author once more attempted to assess in retrospect the novel and its circumstances.

The effect of the "Introduction to the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition" of The Apes of God is to balance the tone and material of the authorial responses written in the time period immediately after the novel was published in 1930. Having emerged from the excitement--the heat of controversy--prompted by the novel and its pamphlet of defense, Lewis demonstrates far less concern about whom he attacked and why. He attempts to provide, rather, a description of the world that invited the satirist's attention:

> Society is a stately organism; but the social historian or the watchful satirist cannot begin his work without a clinical survey of the matter in hand. So the figures in this book must be regarded as bloodstream creatures who, without being of criminal status, could not be commended by any sociologic expert as first-rate citizens. The small-time Paladins of the Pen, the lady

> with the latchkey in Chelsea, the rich Jew who acts Proust, advertised as Apes, more or less, were presented to the shell-shaken society of the 'Twenties as a clinical picture of what, in the main, should be discouraged.[32]

Lewis describes the "contagions" of the "two feverish decades" in terms of three general manifestations:

> (1) in politics, a self-immolating hysterical liberalism, (2) in literature, a maniacal taste for debunking the literary heroes of the past century; and (3) in sex, a wave of male perversion among the young.[33]

Relating these phenomena to the violence of the social upheaval in England, and more specifically, to the dramatic rise in socialist sympathies in the post-war era, Lewis invites the reader to explore the novel in a context quite separate from that of the immediate personal sentiments of Satire & Fiction.

In spite of the serious tone of his retrospective socio-political analysis, Lewis remains mindful in this, his final extended statement about the novel, of the work's "carnivalesque" quality and assures his reader that in rereading the pages of The Apes of God "it is their lightheartedness which, more than anything else, impresses one."[34] Thus Lewis evokes, even here, the divergent attitudes demonstrated in his previous comments on the work. The apes of God among whom he moved in "the shell-shaken society of the 'Twenties" were, he says, indeed "deadly parasites," but, he reminds his reader, he had moved among them "in company with the Comic Muse."[35]

4. CRITICISM OF THE APES OF GOD

In 1930 the late Wyndham Lewis . . . published a sort of a novel entitled The Apes of God. . . . It is a very long, rather congested and very complex satire. . . . Perhaps nobody reads it today.

--Constantine FitzGibbon, "Introduction," The Death of the King's Canary (by Dylan Thomas and John Davenport)

a. The Critics

Critics who respond to The Apes of God generally demonstrate a greater disposition toward commenting rather hastily about the nature and subject of the novel than toward attempting to deal with the matter of the text itself in any deliberate and comprehensive way. The authors of surveys of English literature, for example, tend to draw attention merely to the identity of Lewis's "apes"--if they write about the novel at all; some go on to make cursory comments about Lewis's theory of satire. Bernard Bergonzi typically begins his brief discussion of the novel in The Twentieth Century by attempting to isolate what he calls the author's "satirical intention." He refers to The Apes of God simply as a "social comedy of ideas directed against English Bloomsbury-bohemia in the twenties."[1] Similarly, Lionel Stevenson describes the novel as a "satirical comedy aimed at the English intelligentsia of [Lewis's] day, particularly as exemplified in the self-satisfied 'Bloomsbury group.'"[2] After a series of short and refreshing insights about a few fairly isolated facets of the novel, Stevenson makes his final assessment of the book, stating that it is "redeemed in spots by farcical episodes and by the precise rendering of vapid dialogue." Yet, he adds, it "becomes tedious from its inordinate length and unremitting malice."[3] Stevenson's judgement, an extension of earlier assessments, is similar also to that of V. S. Pritchett, who states:

> The Apes of God can be read for one or two fine broad scenes of libel . . . and for its general blood bath in the literary society of the Twenties. . . . Exciting sentence by sentence, image by image, it is all too much page by page.[4]

The Apes of God is not a novel which is easily read; it is not easily commented upon. These facts could be responsible for what seems to be a reluctance, on the part of some critics, to attempt to break through the surface of the novel--to take seriously the vast constellation of signs that defines it. This hesitancy, to be found even among the most seasoned of Lewis scholars, is frequently evident in critical judgements that appear to have been arrived at hastily. William H. Pritchard, for example, who refers to The Apes of God as an "immense and barely readable 'problem' book,"[5] says that it "probably shares with Childermass [1928] the gloomy distinction of having been left unfinished by more people than any other piece of modern fiction."[6] His own sense of the unsatisfactory nature of the novel leads him to imply that The Apes of God is significant only insofar as it is an attempt to respond to Joyce, and can be compared to Ulysses (1922). He calls it a "monstrous parody of twentieth-century 'mental language.'"[7] The rather arbitrary context he creates for the novel (by judging it simply as a failed Ulysses) allows him to dismiss it as a literary work worthy of serious study. He declares that "Ulysses is a great novel--Apes merely a curiosity investigated by few."[8]

Pritchard's uneasiness about the novel is implicit in the contradictory hyperboles he employs in his discussion of it. While he refers to the "highly energized descriptions"[9] in the work, and to its "tremendous energies" (which, he argues, are improperly focused),[10] he still sees fit to describe The Apes of God as "a monumentally dead book."[11]

Pritchard's critical approach to the novel, which is to attempt to evaluate it in the process of avoiding the text itself altogether (one has the sense that he is one of those who left the book unfinished) is rather typical even of the more serious responses to the work. Geoffrey Wagner notes in Wyndham Lewis: A Portrait of the Artist as the Enemy (1957) that critical evaluations of The Apes of God tend to be opinionative.[12] Certainly many even of the more extensive responses to Lewis's work, like Wagner's own observations, consist more of a series of often unqualified judgements and estimations than of deliberate attempts to explicate the text. Lewis critics seem frequently to feel compelled merely to balance their own opinions about Lewis's work against the opinions of others: they defend or deprecate. They do either with the apparent acknowledgement that others have done otherwise. They do both vehemently. Wagner, who quotes Hugh Kenner as having said that The Apes of God is Lewis's "worst-written" book, states that it is, "of course, his best."[13] Kenner himself declares that the "vast grand tour of Bloomsbury is in a dozen ways a tour de force,"[14] yet he judges the novel unsatisfactory. Neither of these critics, in their respective full-length studies of Lewis's work, could be said to have penetrated the vast surface of the novel to any significant degree. Both Kenner and Wagner merely carry on the pattern of responses to The Apes of God established by the earliest critics: the reviewers for London papers and literary magazines, whose comments fall almost exclusively into the category of "opinion." Representative of these, Cecil Roberts, reviewing the book in 1930, in The Sphere, declares simply that the book "is not literature. It is insolence. I don't mind being called ignorant or old-fashioned for saying so."[15] L. P. Hartley, reviewing for The Weekly Sketch, takes the opposite position:

> To read the book is no light undertaking--it is very heavy in the hand, a strain on the muscles as well as on the mind, and it contains matter that will startle the least prudish. It can only be recommended to those who take their fiction seriously; but they will find it, like Mr. Belloc's tiger, 'well worth the trouble and expense.'[16]

Other early reviewers, aware of the divergence in critical opinion, attempt to explain and reconcile the two primary points of view; the most notable of these is the reviewer (unidentified) from The Glasgow Herald, who writes:

> Apes of God is not for all palates. Its bulk is bound to scare away many potential readers. Its lack of any reticence will nauseate finical readers. Its copious employment of technical terms of physiology and of not always euphonious neologisms will weary others. The extremely well-executed designs by the author will antagonize bigoted representationalists who cannot reconcile any unorthodox form of art with sincerity and sanity. But after all these classes are exhausted, and after we subtract 90 per cent. of the reading public who imagine that it is the author's duty to do the thinking, and theirs to be merely passive receptacles for his entertainment, there should be enough readers left to have made it worth Mr. Lewis's trouble to devote the years which must have gone to the production of this monumental volume.[17]

If the relative significance of individual critical opinions could be considered to be proportionate to the reputations of the evaluators, one could say that The Apes of God is indeed a work worthy of high esteem. Lewis, for example, received overwhelmingly favourable responses from T. S. Eliot, to whom he submitted several episodes of the novel for publication in The Criterion in 1924. Eliot, who was later to describe Lewis as "the greatest prose master of style of my generation," responded to the first fragments of The Apes of God with great excitement: "You have surpassed yourself and everything. It is worthwhile running the Criterion just to publish these. It is so immense I have no words for it."[18] When the novel appeared W. B. Yeats wrote to Lewis. His warm positive response to the novel was ironically mixed with praise for Edith Sitwell's Gold Coast Customs (1929). He wrote from Dublin:

> Somebody tells me that you have satirised Edith Sitwell. If that is so, visionary excitement has in part benumbed your senses. When I read her Gold Coast Customs a year ago, I felt, as on first reading The Apes of God, that something absent from all literature for a generation was back again, and in a form rare in the literature of all generations, passion enobled by intensity, by endurance, by wisdom. We had it in one man once. He lies in St. Patrick's now under the greatest epitaph in history.[19]

Among the more recent critical responses to the novel are those provided by Robert T. Chapman and Timothy Materer. Each includes a previously-published article on The Apes of God as a chapter in his full-length study of Lewis's fiction. Materer, in Wyndham Lewis the Novelist (1976) provides a slightly amplified version of an article first published in the Wyndham Lewis Special Issue of Agenda (Autumn-Winter 1969-70). He refers to the novel as a failure at one point,[20] isolating its primary fault as its "confusion between pictorial and narrative values."[21] Yet he calls it "one of [Lewis's] most distinctive and remarkable achievements"[22] and states that it is (along with Snooty Baronet, The Revenge for Love, and Self-Condemned) one of his "four great novels."[23]

Materer's response to The Apes of God is not merely opinionative: he does provide some remarks about the substance of the book which, though they tend to be scattered, might serve at least as a series of probes which could provide useful clues for anyone who wants to explore the novel more fully. Like all the critics before him, however, he chooses simply to comment on interesting fragments of the work, rather than attempt to arrive at a view of it as a coherent gesture, as the product of a unified vision.

One of the most complete critical treatments of The Apes of God to date is that by Robert T. Chapman. His 1971 article for Contemporary Literature was re-issued as a chapter in his book-length study of Lewis, Wyndham Lewis: Fictions and Satires (1973). Chapman isolates his intentions quite specifically, and proceeds to provide a useful--if sketchy and flawed--discussion of how the novel functions:

> The Apes of God contains its own aesthetic manifesto, a detailed statement of positives amid a welter of grotesque and satirical portraits, the effect of which is to clarify Lewis' aims and achievement in the novel. It is this reflexive self-commentary which makes coherent what might otherwise seem to be a sprawling picaresque plot larded with philosophizing.[24]

While Chapman is correct in assuming that the most useful apparatus for dealing with the novel is found in its own "aesthetic manifesto," he fails to "clarify" what he refers to as "Lewis's aims and achievement in the novel." He instead provides his reader mostly with bits of information which have appeared in much of the criticism of the past: an extensive catalogue of what he calls "Lewis's bêtes noires," an identification of some of the obvious targets of satire (provided without an illuminating context), and an unquestioning acceptance of Pierpoint as a Lewis-persona who presides over the action from a position of detachment, and who is himself not subject to Lewis's satiric barbs.

The most recent responses to the novel, including an article by Paul Edwards (1980) and a chapter in Jeffrey Meyers' biography, The Enemy, unfortunately offer little that is valuable in the manner of textual explication. Edwards, whose comments are the more valuable of the two, argues that the book's meaning "is recoverable from the text itself,"[25] but provides few remarks that would illuminate a reading of the novel, apart from his useful emphasis on death as one of the most important themes of the book. He does go so far as to mention, but fails to explore, what he calls "a subdued undercurrent of politics"[26] in the work's prologue.

Meyers, for his part, is--as a biographer--understandably less concerned with the text of the novel than with the years of its production as an era in Lewis's life. He reproduces in his chapter on The Apes of God the manner and pattern of his recent essay on Self Condemned:[27] he speaks of each work as a roman à clef and focusses on Lewis's personal and professional relationships with the people he projected into his fiction. Of The Apes of God he states unequivocally that the "story of Lewis' personal relations with his victims and the complex reasons for his devastating blast of Bloomsbury, the Sitwells, the Schiffs, Edwin Muir, T. S. Eliot, Dick Wyndham, Stephen Spender and Edgell Rickword are now the most interesting aspects of the book and the key to its meaning."[28] But Meyers does not indicate how this information could contribute to an understanding of the novel as a work of literature. In fact, his own misapprehension of the matter of the novel itself is underlined most prominently in some of the inappropriate or disproportionate judgements he makes regarding the book. He refers, for example, to the Omega rumpus with Roger Fry in 1913 as "the direct, though delayed"[29] inspiration for the novel; isolates as "significant"[30] the brief cameo-roles of Hedgepenshot Mandeville Pickwort and Zulu Blades (simply to justify a digression on

Lewis's relationship with their real-life models: Edgell Rickword and Roy Campbell); and misinterprets Lewis's attitude toward Sorel and the General Strike.[31] Meyers' remarks reflect his only cursory attention to a work for which he cared little. He calls The Apes of God (along with The Childermass) an "over-written, tiresome and unreadable"[32] book.

Opinion and evaluation such as Meyers' serves a function in literary criticism. Opinion without evidence of explication, however, is subject to suspicion; evaluation without explication is tantamount to critical negligence. It is both interesting and heartening, for example, for the Lewis-fan to know that the esteemed critic, Walter Allen, closes his famous study of the English novel with the statement that while Joyce and Lawrence, "in their opposed ways . . . took the English novel as far as it has yet gone, . . . none of their younger contemporaries, except Wyndham Lewis [underlining mine], in a way totally different from either, has come near catching up with them."[33] Yet Allen, throughout his 439 page study, neglects to mention even the title of any one of Lewis's novels. Not only does he leave his reader with none of his own penetrating observations about Lewis's fiction (such observations as gave rise to his assessment), but also his negligence detracts from what might at first be perceived as a noteworthy observation.

Lewis criticism has never suffered from a lack of opinion; it suffers from lack of attention to the text. Various means of escaping having to confront Lewis directly through his work have been devised even by some who have devoted much time to the study of his books. Kenner, with his somewhat awkward and mechanical critical scheme of the Lewis-persona, reduces his works to the status of vehicles used to transmit a ubiquitous but inflexible and obscuring Lewis-mask. Wagner almost loses sight of Lewis altogether in his attempts to reveal to his reader the influences that helped to form what Wagner calls "the fascist mentality." The more recent critics of Lewis's fiction, Materer and Chapman, in their joint assumption that we need more general introductions to Lewis, spend such disproportionate amounts of their time and space on plot summary and generalized commentary that they, too, provide little material that casts a significant new light on the literary texts.

In view of the direction that Lewis criticism--and especially criticism of Lewis's novel of 1930--has gone, one could see the remarks of John Gawsworth (who wrote an early critical study of Lewis's work entitled Apes, Japes and Hitlerism [1932]) as being expressive of an attitude or a complex of opinions which seem to have given rise to many of the confused utterances of the Apes-critic:

> It is not a good book in the accepted sense of the word, yet somehow it just falls short of being a great book. It possesses an indefinable, intangible quality that it is impossible to analyse. Unquestionably it is Lewis' greatest achievement.[34]

b. Cracking Monkey Nuts: The Author Responds

Writers who comment--either favourably or unfavourably--on the work of Wyndham Lewis, generally tend to agree on one thing: that Lewis's work displays an inimitable vitality reflecting the overwhelming creative energy of the man. Acknowledgement of Lewis as a uniquely forceful writer can be found over and over again from the earliest responses to his work through to the most recent. Typical of virtually all Lewis criticism in this respect is the composite assessment of his work up to 1929, provided in the form of a catalogue of quotations printed on the dust-wrapper of the first edition of *The Apes of God*, itself perhaps the most remarkable of all displays of Lewis-energy. Alan Kemp is quoted from *The Sketch*, in 1929: "You are as much in contact with a *force* when you grip a book by Wyndham Lewis as you are when you grip the handles of an electric battery." Another commentator, identified simply as C. F., in *The Westminster Gazette* (1927), refers to Lewis's "vigorous" mind and his "most forceful and provocative" pen. W. B. Yeats is quoted using the word "powerful" to describe Lewis's creative prose. Cyril Connolly says, "[n]o living writer has the same aggressive intellectual vitality." Herbert Read calls Lewis "by far the most active force among us," a man who has "a lusty vigour without parallel in contemporary criticism." Roy Campbell speaks of Lewis's "colossal punch"; T. S. Eliot says, "[i]n the work of Mr. Lewis we recognise the thought of the modern and the energy of the cave-man." In the same condensed display of critics--all these on one page--Beverley Nichols of *The Sketch* (1927), is quoted as saying:"Mr. Wyndham Lewis is one of the very few critics who may be counted upon to provide a bomb which really does explode."

The Apes of God was perceived, when it appeared in 1930, as another explosion of the Lewis-gun, but even critics who had learned what to anticipate from Lewis agreed that this time he had gone too far. Frequently in effect reducing or misconstruing what it was that the author's heavy artillery had been aimed at in the novel, they proclaimed that the satiric barrage was, above all, disproportionate in relation to the target, which itself was regarded by most as being rather insignificant. Several years after the book's appearance, Cyril Connolly, in Enemies of Promise (1948), continued to criticize Lewis for his "lack of proportion." Alluding to what he saw as Lewis's methods in The Apes of God, Connolly spoke of the author's turning "from rending an important writer to maul an obscure and inconsiderable hack." He continued:

> He is like a maddened elephant which, careering through a village, sometimes leans against a house and carelessly demolishes the most compact masonry, trumpeting defiance to the inhabitants within, sometimes pursues a dog or a chicken or stops to uproot a shrub or bang a piece of corrugated iron.[35]

Like many commentators on Lewis's The Apes of God, Connolly criticizes the author for seemingly wasting his energy as a satirist on objects that are too trivial for his grand-scale attack. His assessment is echoed in the words of other critics. V. S. Pritchett, in Books in General (1953), states that the "fatal limitation" of the novel is "triviality of subject."[36] John R. Harrison, in The Reactionaries (1966) says what "is most striking about this novel, of gigantic bulk and linguistic brilliance, is that Lewis/Pierpoint should expend so much energy on such trivialities."[37] Richard Mayne, on the other hand, encouraging the readers of the novel (in 1955) not to miss the point and forget "the trivial inspiration of Joseph Andrews, The Dunciad, and The Rape of the Lock," defends the ostensibly unimportant status of Lewis's targets. But the "trivialities" mentioned by Harrison and Mayne are evoked again by Frank Swinnerton in 1954. As well as appealing, like Connolly before him, to a graphic illustration which was somehow, like Connolly's elephant, meant to provide a sense of what these critics perceived as the rather arbitrary and misguided nature of Lewis's over-zealous attacks, Swinnerton writes:

> he was too much concerned . . . with the silly little tribe of unimportant artists and writers, the unpublished, the barely publishable, the half-known, the eccentric, the homosexual, and the dilettantish. He could bowl them over like ninepins, a fearful slaughter; but he had to pretend, as another famous fighter did, that they were more dangerous as opponents than in fact they were.
>
> The windmills with which Lewis so furiously engaged for a good part of his time were unimportant windmills. He was mistaken in thinking that he was attacking essentials.[38]

Connolly, Swinnerton, and other critics were working within what one could almost call an established critical tradition, as far as their opinions of *The Apes of God* are concerned. Richard Aldington, who initiated this stream of criticism, wrote the first significant review of the novel in the *Sunday Referee*, 15 June 1930. His article, republished in *Richard Aldington: Selected Critical Writings 1928-1960* (1970), bears extended transcription here both for itself and because of the fact that Lewis--significantly--was later to respond specifically to it. Indeed, one of Lewis's reactions to the review is implicit in *Satire & Fiction*, where he appreciatively quotes large sections of Aldington's notice, but significantly omits the portions underlined in the excerpts quoted here:

> *The Apes of God* is one of the most belligerent books I have ever read. . . . When you consider the prodigal exertion of energy and its victims, you are inevitably reminded of the god Thor using his invincible hammer to crack monkey nuts. *In fact, the whole thing is overdone. While the reader is fascinated into admiration by Mr. Lewis's gifts as a writer, his energy, his wit, his style, his tremendous gusto, his ferocious sense of farce, the attack is made with such frightfulness and the victims are so comparatively innocent that* all sympathy is diverted to the casualties which are caused by this Lewis Gun of Literature. 'Tis excellent to have a giant's strength, but--
>
> . . . .

> But why, one asks, waste all this tremendous energy, wit, and hatred on a set of Bloomsbury and Chelsea parish pumpers? Why, in fact, be so confoundedly literary in one's hates? Why launch Achilles into a Batrachomiomachia? Even if you make the frogs and mice nine feet high? Hit those your own size! What have the unlucky X, Y, and Z done that they should thus be sent festering through Florence?[39]

To suggest, as contemporary critics did, that the satiric targets of *The Apes of God* were too insignificant to warrant Lewis's treatment of them, that the novel, in other words, is equivalent--as Richard Aldington wrote--to "the god Thor's using his hammer to crack monkey nuts," is to fail to acknowledge the immediate context in which the novel was composed. "'London is divided into two or three big literary gangs,'" Lewis is quoted as saying in 1931 (in Louise Morgan's *Writers at Work*). "'I don't belong to any of these organizations.'" Lewis's own place among London's reigning artistic coteries--or at least the manner in which he perceived his relationship to them--influenced greatly many of his literary activities in the twenties. "'Whenever you get big groups like this it leaves a wide margin; there is a no-man's-land where an independent spirit can install himself and do quite well,'" Lewis told Morgan. "'There's a great deal of room in London for the solitary racketeer,'"[40] he concluded, evoking the one reference to himself in *The Apes of God* as a "solitary high-brow" carrying on "*teiloperationen*" against the democratization of intellect and art (*Apes*, 401-02/419). The image of Lewis as an independent spirit, or as he says in a typescript version of *The Apes of God*, a "solitary raider"[41] carrying on his partisan manoeuvres against universal "high-brow capitulation" (*Apes*, 401/419) is a useful clue to why Lewis chose, in his gigantic satire, to lash out against the specific people who became the recognisable targets of the book.

The Sitwells, Schiffs, and Wadsworths, along with Richard Wyndham, Ada Leverson and others, were members of a social and artistic circle--a gang, as Lewis would have it[42]--that was more significant than the more widely-recognized Bloomsbury group in shaping the world that most immediately affected Lewis's own artistic pursuits. These people were all members of the monied establishment whose changing attitudes towards their own wealth and cultural responsibility were creating conditions in which the "'professional'" artist--"that rare man born for an exacting intellectual task, and devoting his life unsparingly to it" (Apes, 122/130)--could not, Lewis believed, continue to work effectively. By their own dilettantish artistic activities (none of them depended for their livelihood on the financially-viable disposal of the work of their creative hands), they contributed, in his estimation, to the deterioration of the structure of stable wealth that had once sustained the graphic and plastic arts as the activity of the serious craftsman.

Lewis himself experienced the effects of the presence in the art world of these literary racketeers, as the analysis of The Apes of God which follows indicates. And he never denied that his novel was the product of personal observation. He was, in fact, as "The Encyclical" indicates, quite unequivocal on this matter. The "Extract From [the] Encyclical Addressed to Mr. Zagreus" begins:

> In my review of this society, especially with regard to its reaction upon art, I rather insist upon than seek to slur over the fact that I am a party. But it is from amongst the parties that the acting judge is ultimately chosen. Where else should you

> get him from? The supreme judge is constantly absent. What we call a judge is a successful partizan. . . .--There is no universal consent upon the subjects of which I am treating. (Apes, 118/125-26)

The encyclical ends on the same note:

> To return to what I began by saying as to being a party. I am not in agreement with the current belief in a strained 'impersonality' as the secret of artistic success. Nor can I see the sense of pretending--as it must be a pretence, and a thin one, too--that in my account to you of what I have seen I can be impartial and omniscient. That would be in the nature of a bluff or a blasphemy. There can only be one judge, and I am not he.
>
> I am not a judge but a party. All I can claim is that my cause is not an idle one--that I appeal less to passion than to reason. (Apes, 125/133)

The targets of Lewis's hammer-blows loomed far larger and more significant, in his perception, than Aldington's projected monkey nuts.

In an interview in 1930 Lewis addressed himself to those who would refuse to take The Apes of God seriously (because--as he readily acknowledged--it contained elements of the grotesque; because the satire was based in exaggeration, farce, and bombast) and insisted that the conditions he called attention to in the novel reflected "a real state of things--one real enough to be perilous to art and letters." He argued:

> 'When an actor on the stage lights a cigarette, he must do it with a flourish, in order to "get it across," . . . and it is in this sense only that I have exaggerated. The Apes of God is a comedy; but one based upon fact. My cigarettes are genuine.'[43]

For those who questioned the very existence of the world Lewis projected in this satiric fiction he had a further response. "[T]heir opinion is of no importance [for] they do not possess the necessary information,"[44] he said, thus, as it happens, uttering words that could be applied readily enough to most of those who have commented on The Apes of God since 1930. This thesis is an attempt to do what the criticism of this novel has so far failed to do: to reconstruct the personal, artistic, social, and political contexts that inform the structure and content of the work--to provide much of the "necessary information" Lewis alluded to--in such a way as to encourage the coherent and useful criticism of The Apes of God.

PART TWO: THE TEXT

A. FRAMEWORK OF THE NOVEL: A SOCIO-POLITICAL SCAFFOLD

> From the first page to the last the reader is borne forward on the tide of an elemental rhythm. The drums of Death that haunt the dream-picture of the opening of the book are still rolling as the curtain goes down.
>
> --Wyndham Lewis, [Prospectus for the privately printed limited edition of The Apes of God] [1929? 1930?]

5. FREDIGONDE: "WHAT'S IN A NAME?"

Early in 1931 Wyndham Lewis produced a typescript draft of an introduction or foreword to his proposed cheap edition of The Apes of God. However, because the author's own popular edition of the novel never appeared, the foreword remained unpublished, at least until 1937,[1] when Lewis, realizing that Blasting & Bombardiering was like The Apes of God in that it had its origins in the war, returned to the "Preface" and drew from it a short fragment for inclusion in the "Introduction" of his autobiography:

> In the first artillery attack upon Passchendaele I was an observation post, with the German trenches a few yards ahead, and beneath me. My line to the Battery had been cut by shell-fire, and after a time, as there was nothing to do, I went down into the dug-out and took a note-book I always carried with me and described what I had just seen. I thought of starting my book with the flickering of the candle upon the rat-infested waters of the dug-out: but when I mentioned this plan to a critical publisher he said he thought that no one would read about the War--that the War-baby, or Cantleman's Spring Mate was all right, but now everyone wanted to forget the War.[2]

The passage quoted here brought to a conclusion a section within the "Introduction" to Blasting & Bombardiering. The original draft of 1931 had continued, however:

> And so I dropped that [the idea of writing a book about the War].
>
> But I have now written the first real book of the Peace! That book is the Apes of God.[3]

It is not altogether surprising that Lewis used the same material to introduce two works that are in a number of ways so remarkably dissimilar. He did not, after all, hesitate to admit in Rude Assignment that "any one of my books is connected with every other" and also to describe his oeuvre to date as "a litter of books, not really discrete."[4] Furthermore, if one accepts Lewis's definition (provided in his manuscript introduction) of the author of The Apes of God as a "chronicler . . . of this Great Peace,"[5] one can easily appreciate Lewis's war and post-war autobiography as a noteworthy gloss on the world of the novel, providing, as it does, a sensitive human response to a period which began with the Great War and ended with the General Strike of 1926. The two works, Blasting & Bombardiering and The Apes of God, divergent as they are in manner and tone, both record one man's response to a particular milieu, and, more specifically, to the dynamics of a particular war and peace. Certainly this view of the common nature of these works is supported by Anne Wyndham Lewis's "Preface to the New Edition" of Blasting & Bombardiering (1967) which is as descriptive of the era Lewis explored in The Apes of God as it is of the world he recalled in his first autobiography:

> Peace with its terrible epidemic, the Roaring Twenties with its disillusion, despair and growing unemployment. Veterans begging in the gutters and unemployed miners filling the streets with their beautiful songs. All this is captured here and shown to lead to the horror of the General Strike.[6]

It would be difficult to over-estimate Lewis's perception of the war as a "tremendous landmark"[7]--a great wall, or a bridge--standing between two worlds. The war "imposes itself upon our computations of time like the birth of Christ," he wrote. "We say 'pre-war' and 'post-war', rather as we say B.C. or A.D."[8] It was with sardonic humour that he spoke of that "unseemly joke,"[9] the First World War, in Blasting & Bombardiering. If the war was, as he said, a "particularly silly"[10] one, the peace, or "post-war" was equally so. He wrote, with considerable sarcasm: "I always think myself that 'great' as the Great War undoubtedly was, the Peace has been even greater."[11] The

"'Post-war,'" or "the war-sickness" as Lewis called it, was something akin, he said, to "'a fool's paradise.'"[12] In Rude Assignment he was to speak retrospectively of it--and, more generally, of what he perceived to be an era of decadence between the two wars--as "a moronic inferno of insipidity and decay."[13] "The war bled the world white" Lewis wrote in Blasting & Bombardiering:

> It had to recover. While it was in that exhausted state a sort of weed-world sprang up and flourished. All that was real was in eclipse, so all that was unreal came into its own and ran riot for a season.[14]

The post-war period was looked upon by Lewis as a "Utopia-gone-wrong"[15] when he recalled his impressions of it in Rude Assignment.[16] This era, in his perception, came to an end with the General Strike. "Then began a period of a new complexion," he wrote. "It was no longer 'post-war'. We needn't call it anything. It's just the period we're living in today."[17] The year of the General Strike not only brought the post-war to a conclusion in Lewis's eyes; it marked also the beginning of his political consciousness. Recovering from the shock of the war and its aftermath, Lewis ceased to be "innocent of all political motives,"[18] as he claimed to have been during his Blast days and later. He began to perceive the all-pervasive influence of politics in the world around him, and expressed his observations in his first political works: The Art of Being Ruled and The Lion and the Fox. Recalling in 1937 the birth of his own political awareness, he wrote:

> Anyhow, in 1926 I began writing about politics, not because I like politics but everything was getting bogged in them and before you could do anything you had to deal with the politics with which it was encrusted. And I've got so bepoliticked myself in the process that in order to get at me, to-day, you

> have to get the politics off me first. . . . 1926.
> That was when politics began for me in earnest.
> I've never had a moment's peace since.[19]

Even in the early days of Blast, a decade before the self-conscious flowering of his political awareness, Lewis expressed his belief that the possibility and quality of artistic expression in a particular cultural setting is directly related to the social and political conditions the artist is subject to. Problems related to the survival and effective functioning of the artist in a given milieu are discussed throughout Lewis's work, from his earliest novel (Tarr) to his latest criticism (The Writer and the Absolute [1952]). The progressive articulation of these problems demonstrates an increasingly political orientation, however, and thus reflects the development of Lewis's own conviction that art cannot be isolated or extricated from politics. Lewis's concerns about the functioning of the body politic, about power and war, did not, however, tend to distract him from his primary interest: the survival of the arts. On the contrary, the apprehensive and sometimes apocalyptic titles which he gave to segments of his work (for example, Men Without Art [1934] and "Towards an Art-less Society "--a chapter heading in Blasting & Bombardiering), were intended to reflect the raison d'etre of his specifically political concerns. "It is as an artist I am writing," he stated in Blasting & Bombardiering.[20] This statement was repeated in various forms, throughout his work, as he continued to fight to salvage the arts in the chaos which resulted primarily, he thought, from "ten years of war in a generation."[21] Lewis was always mindful of a belief expressed at great length throughout The Lion and the Fox, but more succinctly in Blasting & Bombardiering:

> The Arts with their great capital A's are, considered as plants, decidedly unrobust. They are the sport, at the best, of political chance: parasitically dependent upon the good health of the social body.[22]

Lewis had seen, in the pre-war world, what he spoke of as the "ferment of the artistic intelligence"[23] in the great art movements of the early twentieth century: "Europe was full," he wrote, "of titanic stirrings and snortings--a new art coming to flower to celebrate or to announce a 'new age.'"[24] He had recognized great promise in the contributions of "The Men of 1914." But the war had brutally put an end to all these indulgences of the human imagination. "We are the first Men of a Future that has not materialized," he wrote in Blasting & Bombardiering. "We belong to a 'great age' that has not 'come off,'"[25] he continued.

> World-politics stepped in, and a war was started which has not ended yet: a 'war to end war'. But it merely ended art. It did not end war.
>
> Before the 'great War' of 1914-18 was over it altered the face of our civilization. It left the European nations impoverished, shell-shocked, discouraged and unsettled. . . .
>
> And the great social changes which with such uncouth and wasteful violence started to get themselves born, in that tragical atmosphere, extinguished the arts which were to be their expression, and which had been their heralds.[26]

It was Lewis's concern for the world of art surrounded by a decaying social body (that was itself, he believed, the product of a series of faltering political judgements) that found expression in the thematic focus of The Apes of God. The novel is, as many have thought, a book about painters and writers, art and literature. It is also about politics. It is about the world of art, but it is about this world as it is framed in the context of a country devastated by the first of a series of politically-related devastations: the war of 1914-1918 and the abortive peace that followed it. To interpret the novel in this way is not to impose an alien vision upon it. Lewis himself provides for the readers of The Apes of God a subtle clue to a useful interpretation of the work as a meditation upon power and politics, upon the effects on art of peace and war. The action of the novel is built upon a structural framework defined by the presence of Lady Fredigonde Follett. She appears in the work only at the very beginning and at the very end, and functions, therefore, as an unobtrusive, yet pervasive, presence. The interpretive clue referred to here is in that Victorian lady's name. Follett is from "folet," a diminutive of the Old French word "fol," meaning "foolish." Fredigonde is from the Old German, and is a composite of two words: "frithu," meaning "peace" and "gundi," meaning "war." The action of The Apes of God (like that of Blasting & Bombardiering) takes place within the framework—structurally established--of the First World War and the "peace" that followed it. The action of the novel reflects, throughout, what Lewis saw as the immense foolishness of the political initiative that was expressed in both of these events.

6. BRIDGET: BRUDGET/BUDGET

(Dying! In the streets of London, the last horsebus clattered towards extinction. The aeroplane, that incongruous object, earthbound and wavering, still called forth exclamations of rapture and alarm. Country roads, with blind corners and precipitous inclines, took a last revenge upon the loud invading automobile. There was talk of wild young people in London, more wild and less witty than you would ever guess from the novels of Saki; of night clubs; of negroid dances. People gazed in horror at the paintings of Gauguin, and listened with delighted alarm to the barbaric measures of Stravinsky. The old order, the old bland world, was dying fast: and the Parliament Act was its not too premature obituary. . . .)

--George Dangerfield, The Strange Death of Liberal England (1935)

In *Rotting Hill* (1951), which contains a good deal of talk about what Lewis defines as "the situation created by the rapid conversion of England into a Welfare State,"[1] Lewis retrospectively isolates a particular act of social legislation--Lloyd George's National Insurance Act (1911)--as the culmination of nineteenth-century "liberalism" and the beginning of British socialism. In the story entitled "The Bishop's Fool" the first-person narrator reflects briefly upon the historical development of social welfare, reiterating, as he does so, views on the matter already expressed by Lewis himself in the foreword to his collection:[2]

> historians . . . will marvel at the twelve decades in which the 'liberal' ferment was at work in English life. From such early steps up as the Cotton Factory Regulation Act they will see it at work, through thousands of measures of Christian legislation, up to such a climax as Lloyd George's National Insurance Act. The present socialist government is, then, the most spectacular achievement of a truly idealizing cult. . . .[3]

The National Insurance Act of 1911 (which covered both health and unemployment insurance) "laid the foundation of the Welfare State,"[4] according to Derek Fraser's history of British social policy, for with it "insurance became entrenched in the British way of life."[5] L. C. B. Seaman, in his study of post-Victorian Britain, calls the act "the most important piece of Liberal legislation."[6] Above all, it "established the basis on which most welfare payments were financed thereafter."[7] But if the National Insurance Act was to be singled out as the "kingpin" of the Liberals' social policy (as Fraser puts it),[8] it was still only one of a number of reforms introduced by the Liberal government, including, Fraser notes, "labour exchanges, old-age pensions, school meals, school medical inspection, trade boards and a redistributional budgetary programme."[9]

Lloyd George's budget of 1909, the last item referred to on Fraser's list, seems to have been of particular interest to Lewis, for he makes reference to it in the prologue to The Apes of God. It is, in fact, central to the establishment of a rich narrative, allegorical, and thematic thread that contributes significantly to a political reading of the novel. Referred to by Fraser as "the most famous [budget] in modern English history,"[10] the "People's Budget" (as it was acclaimed by the Liberal press and as it generally came to be known) was a significant landmark in the process of economic levelling central to the formation of a welfare state. Condemned by the conservative press as "'revolutionary and socialist,'"[11] it caused a constitutional crisis in the House of Lords and provided Lewis with an image of the transfer of social power in the midst of the often chaotic pre-war movement toward social democracy. Among the budgetary reforms introduced on 29 April 1909 by Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, were increased death duties and income tax (including a supertax on incomes over £5000 per year). A 20% tax was put on the unearned increment of land value, and new duties were placed on undeveloped land and minerals. These new taxes, which were aimed at a radical redistribution of wealth, understandably precipitated a crisis among the Lords, who were, for the most part, wealthy Conservative landowners. The inevitable rejection of the budget in the House of Lords resulted in a major constitutional battle which was punctuated by two elections in rapid succession in 1910. The final outcome of the struggle was the Parliament Act of 1911 which effectively did away with the English aristocracy by destroying the Lords' power of veto. When the parliament bill was introduced in Parliament, Asquith, the Prime Minister, was heckled for three-quarters of an hour. George Dangerfield reports in his book, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (1935): "There had been nothing like this since 1893, when members fought with disreputable fists along the floor of the House."[12] Asquith became the first Prime Minister in the history of Parliament to be refused a hearing.[13] The bill, however, was finally passed by the Lords, who were under the threat of the creation of 500 Liberal peers (to counterbalance their Conservative majority). The Parliament Act, dramatized, according to L. C. B. Seaman, as "a fundamental struggle between the Peers and the People,"[14] openly introduced class-warfare into the political and social consciousness of the day.

While to today's casual reader it might not seem that Lewis speaks of the acts of social legislation passed in what Dangerfield calls the "one final spasm of Liberal power,"[15] the author of *The Apes of God* does provide his own chronicle and interpretation of those political events and their implications. Lewis's narrative record of the fall of the aristocratic order, presented by means of allegory and allusion, could readily have been interpreted by the attentive contemporary reader who was willing to be receptive to the novel's political nuances.

As has already been demonstrated, the prologue of the novel is particularly politically oriented. In fact, the prologue functions together with the final chapter to create a structural, narrative, and thematic framework within which the action of the novel takes place. It is in the prologue that Lady Fredigonde dreams, in spite of herself, that when she dies she will linger in some form defined by her maid, Bridget. The subject of the dream is particularly repulsive to her, and even frightening:

> Embedded in Bridget! What an end!--in a passion of escape she was back again with the rush of a howitzer's muzzle-velocity, her heart ticking like one-o'clock! (Apes, 16-17/21-22)

Lady Fredigonde experiences "a most offensive ghastly chill" as images of death merge with "the dank impact of that dismal woman" (Apes, 16/21), Bridget. She fears being "buried undead and sentient up to [her] neck in the disobliging bosom of a domestic" (Apes, 16/21). Her articulated apprehensions seem to take on profound political overtones at the point in the text where Lewis records her violent reaction to her own premonition:

> To announce her evasion the great hectoring voice tolled out in a peal of panic:
> 'Budget! Bud-get! BUDGET! (Apes, 17/22)

Lewis had earlier prepared his reader for Bridget's becoming Budget--"Brudget," actually. She had been so named by Kathleen "the comic Limerick parlour-maid" (Apes, 14/19). His drawing attention to the word "Budget" (through repetition and typographical stress), however, suggests that Lady Fredigonde's panic-driven malapropism is not to be overlooked as a trivial slip of the tongue. It can rather be seen as a deliberate allusion to the famous Budget of 1909 which resulted in the struggle between "the people and the Peers." Lady Fredigonde and her maid are representative of what had been dramatized as the warring factions of that early class-war; and the Lady's apprehensive musings about being "buried undead and sentient" (Apes, 16/21) are strangely evocative of the well-remembered words of Lord Curzon that provided a name and a motto for the die-hards or "ditchers," who refused to surrender: "'We will die in the last ditch before we give in.'"[16] Choosing suicide over the humiliating defeat of the creation of hundreds of Liberal peers, their Lordships elected to "die in the dark," as Dangerfield puts it.[17] Just so, Lady Fredigonde, fearing the realization of her prophetic vision, decides:

> She would seek death-the-drummer out, with his insulting strut, his hypnotic tapping: when the house was empty except for Sir James, go to the bath and bleed into it like a Roman, from an incision in an artery! (Apes, 17/22)

The interpretive function of the name of Lady Fredigonde's maid is not restricted to allusions to the Budget of 1909 and the ensuing Parliament Act. A whole portion of the prologue to the novel has the title: "Saint Bride," after Zagreus's own pet-name for his aunt's lady-in-waiting. Here allusion is once more direct and deliberate. Bridget's function as an allegorical extension of "the People" is strengthened here by her identification with Saint Bride (alternatively known as Saint Bridget), one of the most venerated of Irish saints and one who has been immortalized in countless legends, all of which focus on the mercy and pity she demonstrated to the poor.

Once again, some of the narrative details of the passage of the novel named for Bridget or "Saint Bride" unfold in allegorical fashion. The two primary figures are the same: Lady Fredigonde as representative of the aristocratic landed wealthy and Bridget of the common working poor. Lady Fredigonde, whose private cinema of dream continues to overwhelm her conscious mind, imagines herself, in her "prophetic photo-play," the fugitive of the group of bolsheviks who have absconded with her caps. She awakens to find Bridget at her elbow, holding the locket which is the bearer with which Lady Fredigonde's clan ribbons would be affixed to her cap. On its face is chiselled a heraldic figure, "the lozenge to which as Fredigonde she was entitled (both according to the Lyon Office and the Ulster Office)" (Apes, 8-9/13).

> 'Is that Bridget?' she enquires pointedly: she is stiff--strapped down again now, it is impossible to move, but she is master of the situation.
>
> 'Put it down,' she says.
>
> Bridget places the locket she has been holding upon the table. (Apes, 21/26).

Because established traditions and norms still govern this Victorian household, Bridget returns the locket--symbol of Fredigonde's aristocratic lineage and privilege--upon her mistress's request. The very traditions that govern this exchange, however, will soon begin to crumble, showing the stress placed upon them by class-warfare. Before the end of the novel, Lewis reveals the demise of these feudal orders in the household of the Finnian Shaws where Zagreus, as he notices the "unmanageable" nature of the servants, declares: "'Class-War is in full swing at Osmund's'" (Apes, 428/447). At the end of the novel even Bridget becomes involved in the overthrow of the old world. It is she, after all, who helps to effect the final ruin of the aristocratic order by her role as accomplice in the killing of Sir James. She steals his bell so that he cannot "summon his man" who might have saved him from the malicious intents of Lady Fredigonde.

Lewis stated, in Rude Assignment, that The Apes of God is a satire on the upper classes, who had, he said, "outstayed their usefulness" as a class. The self-annihilation of the landed aristocracy as a source of power and influence is effectively dramatized in the novel in the allegorically-charged Folletts and their maid. In the end the Lords, like Sir James, were defeated by their own kind, aided, Lewis suggests, by Liberal legislation formed in the sentiment of a Saint Bride and realized in the socialistically-oriented policy of a "People's Budget."

7. ARCHIE: INHERITED PATHOLOGY

Among the personal belongings Wyndham Lewis took with him when he travelled from England to North America just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War was a rather lengthy letter which he had received from Sydney Schiff in 1924. This item of correspondence contained, within the context of a short critique of some of Lewis's early writing, a specific criticism related to what Schiff viewed as the lack of political orientation in Lewis's work.[1] In Toronto, in 1942, Lewis responded, belatedly, to Schiff's remarks. He recorded on the verso of the last page of Schiff's letter his supposition that in The Apes of God Schiff must have found "all the politics he wanted."[2] Evidently the author of The Apes of God took his own delayed response very seriously, for he considered it important enough to keep a written account of it. He wrote it out and initialled it, not neglecting also to record the date and the place.

Lewis's brief acknowledgement of political orientation in The Apes of God has been separately indexed in Mary F. Daniels' catalogue (1972) of the manuscript collection at Cornell. Neither the author's notation, however, nor the fact of the political orientation of the novel, has received any critical attention. In fact, the novel has not had a political nature attributed to it. D. G. Bridson's study of Lewis's political thought appeared, like Daniels' catalogue, in 1972. In The Filibuster: A Study of the Political Ideas of Wyndham Lewis, Bridson goes only so far as to suggest that there is a discernible narrative connection between The Apes of God and "The Man of the World," a fragmented and unfinished treatise which was to explore, in Bridson's words, "the relationship between modern man and society in terms of culture, government and social behaviour."[3] Aside from this somewhat oblique observation, the author of The Filibuster ignores The Apes of God altogether. Of all the Lewis critics, Robert Chapman, in his allusion to "a seizing-up of the body politic" (represented metaphorically in the novel, he says, in the idea of the General Strike), and Paul Edwards, in his passing reference to an "undercurrent of politics" in the work's prologue, come closest to acknowledging that the novel contains any politics at all.[4]

Yet a close reading of the novel--and especially of the prologue, entitled "Death-the-Drummer"--directs the reader to a consideration of significant contemporary political activity. The prologue points back, by means of allusion, to the significant socialistically-oriented acts of legislation passed by the pre-war Liberal administration. Lewis recognized that the social policy of men like Lloyd George (Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1908-1915), while it was meant to serve the interests of the poor, tended at the same time to isolate the social groups that had already, by this time, begun to move toward confrontation in the emerging class-war. The prologue of The Apes of God, by means of its structural relationship to the final portion of the novel (with its overt expression of socialist revolution), points forward, too, to the General Strike. This immense upheaval, in Lewis's perception of the contemporary social and political scene, was instrumental in hardening the lines of class-warfare and leading to the levelling of all classes in the formation, after the Second World War, of the British Welfare State.[5] The roots and products of class-warfare, and the inevitable emergence of the idea of a comprehensive welfare system are examined throughout the novel, which is, indeed, as Lewis suggested in Rude Assignment, an account of the "extreme decay of the bourgeois era, preceding the present socialist one."[6]

The Apes of God begins with the toilette of Lady Fredigonde Follett, described as an "Ex-Gossip-column-belle" (Apes, 10/14) of "the epoch of the middleclass Elizabeth, Victoria" (Apes, 10/14). It ends with "'Lady Freddy's'" death in one of the upper chambers of her great Victorian house. Lady Fredigonde is the epitome of ailing mid-Victorianism clinging feebly to a way of life doomed to extinction. The war, present in the first sentence of the novel as a cat that "like a beadle goose-stepped with eerie convulsions out of the night cast by a cluster of statuary" (Apes, 7/[11]), functions as a military herald of an altered world that Lady Fredigonde is able to perceive only intuitively and in fragments. The future is one where those of her kind will be regarded merely as the reminders of a past age, as impotent and obsolete as figures of wax or plaster. Like Lady Fredigonde, the Victoriana and souvenirs of Empire with which she so strongly identifies are on the verge of becoming merely the defining accoutrements of a world that will cease to be. As long as these things (catalogued by Lewis in the final paragraph of the prologue) continue to exist, however, they shield the Victorian lady from a conscious realization that threats are being made against her so-very-familiar way of life.

> The manufacture of olivets, the Clapham Sect, the Book of Common Prayer . . . vademecums, lockets and church-hassocks—cockatoos, japanese lacquers, curry and Port Wine . . .—Douglas Jerrold and love's-old-sweet song--crept like an illicit wave with the rustle of her silk petticoats, up to her six and ninetieth birthday: had just licked the base of the GREAT WAR--just wafted her softly beyond it, like a large and sodden leaf. (Apes, 24/30)

Lady Fredigonde has little conscious knowledge of the fragile nature of her state of being, but her unconscious premonitions of a very specific kind of demise and displacement are made clear in the images on the screen of her own "private cinema" (*Apes*, 21/27). The "prophetic photo-play" (*Apes*, 19/24) unwinds to reveal Lady Fredigonde as an exhibit in an unknown museum of the future, her glory: her caps, to be stolen from the mahogany showcases. The caps, which commemorate "[c]ap-wearing victorian heads" (*Apes*, 19/24) (and by implication, the order of Victorian headship) are donned, in Lady Fredigonde's prophetic cinema, by the members of a "Red Sunday-School." They are used to replace "[c]ommunist skull-caps of orphanage-cut" (*Apes*, 19/24).

> At a word from the spectacled Red Scout-Master . . . the little jumping bolsheviks smash the glasses of the show-cases. A thunder of small fists breaks out, like a crash of kettle-drums. *Death-the-drummer!* With idiot-yawp, civilised and whitmanic, they distribute the expensive headwear swiftly, passing from hand to hand. Each adjusts one to its cropped noseless skull: like the spangled paper headdresses torn from a super-Christmas-cracker, the caps decorate the cropped bullet-heads.
>
> The Red Scout-Master . . . reserves for himself the prize-cap, that of Pamela Hennessey. He tries it on. He smirks in the glass of a show-case. (*Apes*, 19/24-25)

The Scout-Master is, of course, a prophetic representation of Archie Margolin, who at the very end of the novel advances "(with his St. Vitus puppet-shiver)" (*Apes*, 625/650) toward "the mighty victorian looking-glasses" (*Apes*, 625/650), where he smiles at himself. With "elf-like nigger-bottom-wagging" (*Apes*, 625/650), he dances to the music of *death-the-drummer* in the reception-room of the Follett mansion. Meanwhile, Lady Fredigonde, startled by the mechanistic rattle of the "jazzing one-time stutter--gutter-thunder" (*Apes*, 624/649) of the street music she hates, expires in Zagreus's arms in the apartment above:

> And then as to Death's daily dancing in the street!
> . . . Wind-and-percussion street-drummers, jazzing
> in the gutter, rattling their boxes for coppers.
> But the jazz is fate, Zagreus insisted. . . . Everytime she heard it, at the foot of the block coming
> rat-tat up-hill, a grimacing Saint-Vitus chorus she
> would cross her fingers detecting its first drum-tap,
> its first soft cymbal--crash-crash, crash-crash.
> (Apes, 17/21)

The "frenzied rattle" (Apes, 624/649) of Death-the-drummer is identified throughout the novel with the Saint Vitus dance. A nickname for chorea, a hereditary and often fatal degenerative disease of the nervous system, the term "Saint Vitus dance" was derived, by association, from the convulsive motor activity of chorea sufferers who made pilgrimages to the shrine of Saint Vitus, hoping to be cured of their spastic condition. The term was used in the Middle Ages to describe the wild leaping and screaming and foaming at the mouth that characterized people possessed by a kind of mass hysteria. Lewis uses it in The Apes of God to evoke what he saw as a debilitating contemporary delirium related to the "idiot mass-sound" (Apes, 443/462) of jazz.

Like the Saint Vitus dance, jazz was, for Lewis, an expression of mob hysteria. It was the rousing song of the contemporary Western public, a public given, Lewis thought, to sensation, submission, and hypnotism.[7] Zagreus, in The Apes of God, insists to Lady Fredigonde that the "jazz is fate" (Apes, 16/21). Lewis, in Time and Western Man (the writing of which was contemporaneous with that of the novel) insisted, rather, that "[p]urpose is betrayed"[8] by the sudden bursting upon the contemporary scene of such a dominant mode of activity. This new musical form must be regarded, according to Lewis, as a concrete manifestation of human will or purpose:

> but the average man marvels, and if he asks himself Why? seeking to account for this appearance, he always has the Zeitgeist to fall back on, if he has no other answer. . . . [It is] 'Nature,' Fate, Zeitgeist, not the work of man. He who is so prone to personalize everything, never sees a human activity expressing itself in these things, for some reason.[9]

The entrancing rhythms of jazz had, Lewis thought, strong political overtones. An extension of what he, in Time and Western Man, called "the romance of action,"[10] jazz, with its imperative mesmeric involvement, created of any one of its adherents, he said, "the ideal slave."[11] It was "marxistic music" (Apes, 443/462) and was being used to summon and entrance a proletarian army.

> Jazz is the folk-music of the metropolitan mass--slum-peasant, machine-minder--the heart-cry of the city-serf. His masters sing his songs--they even write them for him! (Apes, 404/422)

Jazz, "the approved mass-article" (Apes, 404/422), dominates the final pages of The Apes of God where Archie Margolin paces his advance by the rhythms of Death-the-drummer. This proletarian "Eastender" emerges, in the midst of the General Strike, as an heir to the Follett estate--to the spoils of Victorian war and class-war. Margolin's prominent position at the end of the novel heralds what Lewis saw in the later years of the decade as the inevitable dominance of "Musical-politics . . . the politics of hypnotism, enregimentation, the sleep of the dance."[12]

But Margolin himself appears not to be subject to the numbing effects of what Lewis calls the "mass-energy of the music" (Apes, 443/462). He is, rather, one of the masters of the "city-serf" (Apes, 404/422): a prototype of the crowd-master of the new socialist era. Like

Georges Sorel, whose contempt for the crowd as he asked for their "voices" was equal, Lewis says, to that of Coriolanus,[13] Margolin consistently maintains a scornful detachment from members of his own class.

With a prophetic insight that evokes in the reader the recollection of Lady Fredigonde's apocalyptic intuitions, Margolin recognizes the drawing-room of the Follett mansion as a "domestic museum" (Apes, 43/49). This "culture . . . dead as mutton" (Apes, 43/49) offends the "'worker of the world'" (Apes, 429/448) and he expresses his contempt for its offensive "great carcass" (Apes, 43/49). The contempt he demonstrates toward his upper-class patrons in the novel is equalled, however—or superseded--by the disdain he nurtures toward his own class-pals. When he plays at being the "jew-boy from the slum" (Apes, 44/51), in order to evoke the stupid credulousness of Dick Whittingdon, he reveals his scorn not only for his upper-class patron's belief in the stereotyped "militant slum-Jew" (Apes, 46/53), but also for the lower-class world from which that stereotype arose. Margolin is scornful of members of his own class especially for what he sees as their continuous passive sustenance of Victorian culture and for their inability—or refusal--to recognize that they are being used as slaves. He mocks them, the "people downstairs in the coal-hole" (Apes, 49/55):

> Underneath an army of slavish snobs still! The basement was full of people, they were collected near the ovens, coal-holes, sinks, dustbins--a sewer-people his soul sang, in marxist fierceness, for these upstairs-pleasaunces, the Follett masters and mistresses! One shrilled a dismal rag about a honey-stick. The heart broke for Dixie: the voice cracked and crooned, all on account of nigger-heavens--it was funny! The lives of other idiot slaves, in cotton fields, excited it to mournful passions! (Of more musical slaves naturally.) (Apes, 43/50)

Margolin is himself a kind of reification of a particular socio-political will-to-power--swelling with the idea of the powers and wrongs of class--tending by its very existence to realize its own end (in the manner of Fouilée's theory of the idées forces, invoked by Lewis in The Art of Being Ruled).[14] His class-pals are suggestible beings who function (in the language of the jazz-analogue) "in a blind, ecstatic unison, as though in response to the throbbing of some unseen music."[15] It is merely subtle suggestion that forms Margolin's incitement to revolution, but his taunting of Peters, the disgruntled Finnian Shaw butler, reveals quite clearly the insurgent nature of this budding crowd-master's personality:

> 'Here Pete!' called Arch.
>
> With a dark and friendly grin Peters strolled up, stocky and bandy, a butler of steel, to the grinning Eastender waiting to receive him--Peters' little class-pal.
>
> 'Sir!'
>
> 'Here--this gentleman here says Pete we're going to have a proper revolution in Old London Town--you know same as they had in France when old Robesspot--no I'm getting it mixed--old Potemkins!'
>
> The clouds of an impending British Terror descended upon the brow of the butler (who was harshly un-period even anti-period) and he ceased outright to grin. His eyes became those of a wholesale informer, at the bar of summary popular justice, with all his highly-placed arch-enemies about to forfeit the least important parts of their bodies, namely their head-pieces.
>
> 'I shouldn't be surprised if one of these days' said Peters with great energy 'I didn't make a revolution not all on my own--straight I shouldn't!'
>
> Mr. Zagreus left anti-period Peters and his small grinning class-pal and approached the youthful chef-de-cuisine, who stood smiling bashfully with a mighty chopper stuck in his girdle, a great deathsman of dead ruminants and an iconoclast in his way. (Apes, 434/453)

The revolution that Peters looks forward to here is enacted--symbolically at least--in the General Strike, an event that defined and polarized the social classes as none other in contemporary British history had done. This "revolution" dealt a devastating blow to the trade unions movement, and at the same time foretold the final ruin of England's landed society. It was a demonstration of what Lewis, reflecting on his political life during the Second World War, was to call a bloodless "civil convulsion" which "seems to demand increasing numbers of corpses--ruin and loss of every kind, in which frequently the most guilty go scot-free, and the small man is smashed."[16] Lewis had warned of what he saw as the dangers of proletarian revolution in The Art of Being Ruled in 1926. In 1931, having witnessed the outcome of the General Strike, he defined the effects of the "twin abominations"[17] of social revolution and the wars of nations as analogous:

> When two nations fall out the armanent-king and chemical-king rake in the shekels. When two men fall out, the lawyer coins money. When two Classes fall out, it is the same thing. Power, or wealth, passes from both to some third Class.[18]

Archie Margolin is an example of what Lewis saw as a new class of men living off the remains of a landed society ruined by class-warfare. His dominant appearance at the end of The Apes of God does not bode well, in terms of the political vision of the novel. For Lewis, it portends the appearance of the new possessing class, for which a way had been cleared by what Lewis called the gradual but persistent "'liberal' ferment"[19] at work in English life since the last century. Margolin is a prototype of the new citizen of the welfare state, the stark realities of which were to be most evident, Lewis later remarked, in the ruined society, destroyed economy, vanished riches, and shrunken empire of Britain emerging from the chaos of several wars in a generation:

> decay is everywhere, as might be expected. If an aristocratic society suddenly drops to pieces, after many centuries, and if a mercantile class of enormous power and wealth drops to pieces at the same time, there is inevitably a scene of universal wreckage and decay, as when demolition work is in progress.[20]

Although Margolin appears to be in control of his own advance in the "mighty victorian looking-glasses" at the end of the novel, he evokes, by his "St. Vitus puppet-shiver" (Apes, 625/650), the demonstrable symptoms of chorea. Lewis sees him carrying with him--as an inheritance--not only the definable spoils of a ruined Victorian age, but also a no-longer-latent socio-political pathology, drumming death to an era and maybe to the whole of western civilization, as Lewis preferred to define it.

8. THE GENERAL STRIKE: CLASS-WAR IN FULL SWING

> Fifty, or a hundred million people cannot rule. What would they rule? They can only be told that they are ruling, which is another matter: and meanwhile of course they go on labouring just the same as before. The people who tell them they are ruling, those people are in fact the rulers.
>
> --Wyndham Lewis, Rotting Hill (1951)

a. History of the Strike

The General Strike of 1926 provides a name and a focus for the last chapter of The Apes of God. This brief final section of the novel appears almost insubstantial beside the disproportionately long "Lord Osmund's Lenten Party." (Indeed, the chapter rests so much in the shadow of the protracted textual division that precedes it, that W. K. Rose, in a note in The Letters of Wyndham Lewis (1963), indicates that he has forgotten about its existence altogether. He writes: "In the finished version of The Apes of God, 'Lord Osmund's Lenten Party' became the last . . . section.")[1] There seems, furthermore, to be little obvious continuity between the strike and the series of party scenes that immediately precede it. But the final two chapters of the novel are, in fact, intricately related. Lord Osmund's lenten festivity is the final self-indulgent expression of an aristocratic order, the demise of which is a prominent motif throughout The Apes of God. The fallen estate of the aristocrat is graphically demonstrated by "the air of restless improvisation, a sort of quaint, shabby lavishness" (Apes, 350/366) that colours the party atmosphere.[2] Most notable, however, is the fact that the somewhat strained festive activities of Lord Osmund and his party guests serve finally to usher in not Lent, the traditional forty-day fast of the Christian church calendar, but rather what Lewis perceived as quite another season of self-denial: an entire era of British history, dramatically inaugurated by the great social upheaval of 1926--the General Strike.

The closing episode of The Apes of God is in fact a significant and, indeed, essential conclusion to the entire work. It figures importantly in terms of the narrative coherence of the novel, which is directly related to the characters Horace Zagreus and Dan Boleyn. It is in the final chapter that the relationship between Dan and Zagreus (which had provided the raison d'être for Dan's "picaresque"[3] wanderings throughout the London art world, and hence an explanation for the episodic pattern of the work) is brought to an end. The chapter is structurally important: in its re-introduction of Lady Fredigonde it functions as a companion to and a culmination of the novel's prologue. More notably, it is thematically significant: the strike (regarded by Lewis as a devastating blow to a dying order) acts as a metaphor that effectively demonstrates the serious nature of the social decay that Lewis saw expressed in the political direction of the age.

The General Strike, then, has an important function within the narrative and thematic structures of The Apes of God, even though it figures prominently only in the final chapter of the work. Even there, in the chapter to which it gives its name, it is only within the very last pages that the strike itself is explicitly referred to and that its mere physical manifestations are received and recorded by the unperceiving eyes of the just-recently-dispossessed Dan Boleyn:

> When he went out he thought the streets were quiet today. . . . He went into a big street where there was a chocolate omnibus. The omnibus was quite full of policemen. . . . Another omnibus appeared. He did not like to look at it, but it was very crowded, and he noticed a policeman sitting beside the driver and he looked very stern. He supposed that the driver had done something wrong and he was sorry for the driver at once! (Apes, 613-14/638)

Boleyn's naive response to the strike is a predictable expression of his nature. He is a kind of Lewisian Everyman, whose mind is a blunt instrument that allows him to make only the most crude, undiscerning responses to his environment. Typical of his kind, he regards any external sign of the strike as a nuisance, and demonstrates little knowledge of or interest in its causes, or more importantly, its social, economic, or political consequences. In The Apes of God Dan plays the role of what Lewis, in Time and Western Man, calls the astonished plain-man: he is "just another humble cell in the vast democratic body."[4]

It is because Lewis presents the physical realities of the General Strike through the naive eyes of the near-idiot, Dan Boleyn, that his rendering of the strike activities is at best distorted and fragmentary. The blur that results from the point of view should not, however, suggest to the reader that the author considered the event unimportant either in the context of the novel or within the broader spectrum of his own political thought. Lewis avoided any explicit discussion of strike-related activities probably because he could assume that the series of events that precipitated the strike action and then brought it to an end were still fresh in the minds of his contemporaries. The knowledge that Lewis was free to assume on the part of his first readers cannot, however, be assumed on the part of the readers of today. Therefore, for the purpose of providing the modern reader of The Apes of God with the background necessary for an informed understanding and interpretation of the novel (and especially of its final chapter), a brief overview of the causes and consequences of the General Strike is provided here.

The information recorded below sheds light on the final chapter of the novel. Moreover (by means of an examination of Osbert Sitwell's actual strike-breaking activities), it provides the most graphic demonstration of the subtle ways in which Lewis's apes actually did affect not only the tenor and tone of their age, but even the actual planning and execution of political strategies and events. Lewis had begun to trace the patterns that were to lead to the General Strike long before the strike occurred; he ended his novel with that event because it was, in his eyes, the inevitable outcome of the very configuration of activities and attitudes he had observed among those subtly subversive beings he had come to call the apes of God. Osbert Sitwell was for Lewis a most useful demonstration of the ape of God as bacillus: he can be seen in the discussion that follows as an active contributor to what Lewis regarded as the social and political decay of the post-war era.

The General Strike is regarded by many historians of the inter-war years as the culmination of a series of complex events. R. Page Arnot, whose study of the strike was published in 1929, suggests that its origins can be traced back at least to the Railway Strike of 1911 and the Coal Strike of 1912.[5] Patrick Renshaw, in a much more recent commentary, finds the most immediate causes of the strike in the post-war period: in the government's decision in 1919 to relinquish its own wartime control of the mines and to return them to private ownership.[6] Strongly opposed to the government's proposed move was the triple industrial alliance.[7] When its members threatened united action, the government appointed a Royal Commission on mining, which studied the issue of contention and recommended that the mines be nationalized. The findings of the Royal Commission had no effect on Lloyd George's coalition, however, and in April 1921 the mines were once more placed in the hands of private owners. Renshaw, in his useful introduction to The General Strike, explains lucidly and succinctly the events that followed:

> The owners, faced on their return with plunging profits, proposed huge wage cuts. The miners refused to accept them and were locked out. The triple alliance lumbered up again to help; but this time unity collapsed on 15 April 1921 and the miners were left to fight on alone for months before hunger drove them back to worse terms than they could have had at the beginning. This humiliating defeat was known as Black Friday. . . .
>
> Despite the collapse of Black Friday, the threat of united action by the unions behind the miners on 31 July 1925 forced the Government to pay a subsidy in support of current pay and profits and establish another royal commission into mining. Such was Red Friday.
>
> The Government subsidy was to last nine months. When it ended, the next mining crisis seemed certain to come in May 1926. During that nine months Baldwin's Government had made careful plans for coping with the impending conflict. The unions did nothing effective. . . . When the nine months expired, Baldwin refused to extend the subsidy; the owners imposed . . . pay cuts; the miners refused them and on May Day 1926 they were locked out. Three days later the TUC's [Trades Union Congress] sympathetic strike call had brought industry to a halt across the country. The General Strike had begun.[8]

As Renshaw indicates, the government was not entirely taken by surprise by the strike, for after Red Friday it had begun to make substantial preparations for any possible future emergency. Its own elaborate formal plans for dealing with the anticipated general work stoppage were ready to be set in motion by February 1926 and were augmented by the public activities of the O.M.S.--the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies--established in 1925 and defined in the Home Office Papers as:

> 'an association of loyal citizens organised in the public interest to provide the Government in times of emergency with classified lists of those who will assist in maintaining essential public services

> . . . food, water, light, fuel, power and transport, and who, when called upon by the constitutional authority, will cooperate in upholding law and order.'[9]

In the nine months between Red Friday and the beginning of the General Strike, the O.M.S. registered about 100,000 volunteers[10] who could anticipate acting as lorry, tram,and train drivers; emergency police; or clerical and public service workers.[11] Recalling the time when the O.M.S. went into action, L. S. Amery (who served as Baldwin's colonial secretary) writes:

> Goods flowed by well-thought-out road routes from fishing ports or dairying centres to vast car depots in Hyde Park. . . . Every driver of a car picked up all the passengers he could carry, while others tramped cheerfully more miles a day than they usually walked in a month.[12]

The great numbers of people who volunteered with the O.M.S. and executed their assigned tasks during the strike served overwhelmingly to define the event as a struggle between classes, or in the words of Baldwin's biographers, a "true epic of social warfare."[13] Any great strikes had been feared since 1917, one historian has remarked, "not simply for their own effects, but for their latent possibilities of revolution."[14] This fear was played upon, to the government's advantage, by Stanley Baldwin when on 6 May he broadcast his first wireless message of the strike:

> Constitutional Government is being attacked. Let all good citizens whose livelihood and labour have thus been put in peril bear with fortitude and patience the hardships with which they have been so suddenly confronted. Stand behind the Government who are doing their part, confident that you will co-operate in the measures they have undertaken to preserve the liberties and privileges of the people of these islands. The laws of England are the people's birthright. Those laws are in your keeping. You have made Parliament their guardian. The General Strike is a challenge to

> Parliament, and is the road to anarchy and ruin.[15]

The idea that the strike was, as Baldwin put it, a threat against "the safety and the security of the British Constitution,"[16] that it was as Arnold Bennett states in his journal, "a political crime,"[17] provided reasonable cause for members of the middle-class, especially, to find what Evelyn Waugh called "some . . . useful way of serving 'Jix'[18] and the constitution."[19] (Waugh himself joined a Civil Constabulary Reserve.) Underlining the strong element of class-warfare[20] implicit in the alignments of sympathy for and against, Arnold Bennett provides a clubman's response to the event:

> Wednesday, May 12th.
> The general strike now seems pitiful, foolish--a pathetic attempt of underdogs who hadn't a chance when the over-dogs really set themselves to win. Everybody, nearly, among the over-dogs seems to have joined in with grim enthusiasm to beat the strike.[21]

Prominent among the O.M.S. volunteers were upper-middle-class Cambridge undergraduates and others readily recognizable as "gentlemen." Their incongruous presence aboard buses and trains as drivers and special constables served as a conspicuous reminder that what was going on was, as A. J. P. Taylor puts it, "class war, in polite form."[22] Arnold Bennett's journal entry for 13 May reinforces the idea that the struggle was between the wealthy and the working man:

> Everyone is still preoccupied with the strike. . . . Duff Taylor told great stories of his adventurous journeys on the Tube trains driven by swagger youths in yellow gloves who nevertheless now and then overran the platform with their trains, or pulled up too short. Also of University porters with gold cigarette cases and an incredible politeness and fatherliness towards you for your safety.[23]

The delineation of class effected by the almost absurd circumstances of O.M.S. volunteer activity is given some attention in several brief narrative passages near the end of The Apes of God. Wyndham Lewis had demonstrated his own interest in class warfare as a phenomenon in his major critical treatises of the late 1920s. In The Apes of God he presents Dan Boleyn as one who is unable to understand why apparently well-bred gentlemen would conduct themselves so shamefully as to act familiar with strangers, offering them rides in motor-cars. Dan ponders confusedly:

> They could not possibly be gentlemen. Not gentlemen--only half-sirs and spalpeens conducted themselves in that egregious manner in a public place!
>
> At length a gentleman by himself (or with the deceptive appearance of one) more forward than the rest, actually began to go slower with his machine and came in with it quite near to the edge of the pavement, until he could almost have touched him and the fellow smiled in the most open way, as if he had been acquainted.
>
> 'Would you like a lift?'
>
> He heard the gentleman's voice--if it was a gentleman's--but he declined to believe his ears.
>
> 'Which way are you going?'
>
> It was an educated gentleman he could tell at once now, and he did not doubt that he was somebody of means.
> (Apes, 614/639)

While the concerned citizens recruited by volunteer organizations such as the O.M.S. contributed significantly to the breaking of the strike, other private individuals also played a part in bringing to a halt the strike's momentum. Among these were several whose personal interests in the mining industry determined the urgency of their anti-strike sentiments. Notable among them (especially in the context of a study of The Apes of God) was Osbert Sitwell--poet, aristocrat, and mine-owner. The Sitwell family seat (Renishaw: presumably the model for the site of Lord Osmund's Lenten Party) was situated in the midst of the coal fields of Derbyshire, and so Obsert Sitwell's "native air," as he called it, was "coal smoke, from chimneys slim as obelisks and slag heaps angular as pyramids."[24] Evelyn Waugh's description (in his diary) of the "very large and rather forbidding"[25] Sitwell manor house reinforces the fact that the Sitwells were more than familiar with the coal-miner's native landscape:

> Arterial main roads, coal mines, squalid industrial village, then a park, partly laid out as a golf course, and the house. . . . The house extremely noisy owing to shunting all round it. The lake black with coal dust. A finely laid out terrace garden with a prospect of undulating hills, water and the pit-heads, slag heaps and factory chimneys.[26]

Even though Osbert Sitwell later insisted that he was aware "of the hard conditions" of the colliers' lives, that he knew their profession was "cramping and airless,"[27] he expressed no concern, at the time of the strike, about the miners' lot. Believing that "so notable an advance in conditions had already been achieved for the workers" and that in normal conditions, "so much more would, it was obvious, be secured within the bounds of their lifetime and without civil disturbance,"[28] Sitwell was primarily concerned, he said, with the fact that "our long-settled civil peace, the greatest asset of the British race, stood in jeopardy."[29] He felt compelled to help to end the strike at the first possible moment, but, as he recalls in the volume of his autiobiography entitled Laughter in the Next Room (1948), the typical anti-strike volunteer role of what he called the "exasperated and now embattled bourgeoisie"[30] was a false and inadequate expression of his temperament: "To be a porter for a time, or a lorry driver, would be easy, I considered: for a time, but not for a lifetime."[31] He expresses the sense of impotence he felt in a situation which, he states, seemed "to be slipping, every day, nearer the precipice":[32]

> during the day, I sat, the very picture of a drone, in an armchair, with my back to the window, wondering what could be done. I did not wish to help my country by playing at being an engine driver. (Even as a child I had never harbored that ambition, which now in so many found a sudden release and realization). . . . No, I wanted to aid my native land in a different, perhaps more potent, fashion; helping it, by contributing, through some means or other, to end the conflict. . . .[33]

The several days of the General Strike, Sitwell states in retrospect, "constituted in some ways the most exciting period of my life."[34]

Shortly after the trouble began, Sitwell met with his influential friend, Lady Wimbourne, wife of one of the richest men in England, Lord Wimbourne--a great Welsh landlord, Viceroy of Ireland, and first cousin of Winston Churchill (himself the publisher of the official government strike paper, The British Gazette, and one of the most vocal and militant opponents of the strike)--and suggested to her that Lord Reading (Solicitor General 1910, Lord Chief Justice 1913, H.M.'s High Commissioner, Ambassador Extraordinary to the U.S.A. 1913-19, Viceroy of India 1921-26) should be asked to mediate between the government and the unions. Sitwell was subsequently asked to join Wimbourne, Reading, and Lord Gainford (President of the English Mine Owners Association and a Governor of the pivotal B.B.C.) at Wimbourne House, where these influential figures agreed to bring back to London from Italy, for renewed negotiations, Herbert Samuel (who had been chairman of the 1925-26 Royal Commission on the Coal Industry).[35]

Samuel returned, eager to play an active role in bringing about a settlement, but Baldwin made it clear to him that he could function only as a concerned private citizen, and that his discussions with leaders of the T.U.C. had not a "'vestige of official character.'"[36] Yet, while the government insisted that Samuel's discussions lacked any authority, it maintained informal contact with him and thereby could be sure, Renshaw states, "of receiving a steady stream of information about the TUC's thinking."[37]

Having persuaded Samuel to conduct negotiations, Sitwell's wealthy and powerful associates invited some executive members of the T.U.C. to come to Wimbourne House to attempt to resolve the grievances that had given rise to the strike. Foremost among these leaders was J. H. Thomas (Labour M.P. 1910-31) called, by one historian, the "black 'hero' of Black Friday"[38] because he was one of the labour leaders associated with the collapse of the triple alliance (and hence the failure of the miners' cause) in April 1921. Thomas, whom Sitwell, in his autobiography, refers to persistently and erroneously as the Chairman of the T.U.C. (a position held during the strike by Arthur Pugh and at no time by Thomas), was, of all the leaders of the T.U.C., the most opposed to the very idea of the strike. He was accompanied to Wimbourne House by other T.U.C. executives, but none of the miners' representatives were invited to the talks.[39] When Herbert Smith (president of the Miners Federation of Great Britain--the M.F.G.B.--1921-38) and A. J. Cook (secretary of the M.F.G.B. 1924-31) learned of the talks, they were told by one of the members of the general council, John Bromley:

> 'We are all in this now, and I want to say to the miners in a brotherly, comradely way, but straight--but straight--that this is not a miners' fight now. I am willing to fight along with them and to suffer the consequences, but I am not going to be strangled by my friends.'[40]

The miners' involvement in the strike negotiations was regarded by men like Bromley and Thomas as unnecessary. Thomas, in his meetings with the establishment figures (who eventually included "Lord Londonderry and Lord Gainford, two important coalowners, [and] Lord Reading, a former Liberal Attorney-General")[41] made concessions on the miners' behalf. With neither the consultation nor consent of the leaders of the M.F.G.B., Thomas assured the guests at Wimbourne House that the miners were:

> prepared to accept the Samuel Report as a whole, provided they were given some firm assurances about improvements and reorganisation, and even though this would mean pay cuts.[42]

Tom Jones, Baldwin's friend and speech-writer, was informed of Thomas's statement by Lord Reading. Jones, in turn, reported the news to Baldwin just prior to a meeting of Cabinet on 8 May.[43] Thomas's words had revealed to the government the fact that the T.U.C. was prepared to end the strike. Baldwin needed only to hold firm to his own position (which was to refuse to negotiate until the strike was called off), and wait.

On the evening of 11 May, the general council of the T.U.C. met with the miners' executive and urged them to accept the Samuel memorandum (the terms which Thomas had agreed to on their behalf at Wimbourne House several days before). Because of Baldwin's confident steadfastness, the T.U.C. could not offer the miners any guarantee that the other side would carry out fairly the terms of the agreement. The miners left the meeting profoundly dejected. Later the same evening, Sir Patrick Gower, Baldwin's private secretary, phoned Walter Citrine (General Secretary of the T.U.C. 1926-46) at the T.U.C. headquarters to ask whether members of the general council were planning to call on the Prime Minister, who was waiting up for them. The events that ensued are explained by Renshaw:

> Citrine explained that the general council was still considering the question and asked Gower to wait. He rang back a few minutes later and arranged for a TUC delegation to meet Baldwin the following day. Bevin [General Secretary of the Dockers' Union 1921-40; member of the T.U.C. General Council during the strike] was reassured. He believed Gower's phone call meant that Baldwin must know about the Samuel memorandum and was ready to use it as a basis for settlement. But what he did not know was that Thomas had already passed word to Baldwin that 'though he was encountering the most formidable obstacles, he would, he thought, by 2 a.m., be in a position to call off the General Strike.'[44]

The T.U.C. delegation arrived at 10 Downing Street, as Citrine had suggested, the following day. The members were met at the door and told; "'The Prime Minister will not see you before the strike is called off.'"[45] Thomas confirmed that such was the purpose of the visit, and the delegation went in. They surrendered--without conditions--to Baldwin. "This was a complete débâcle," Renshaw remarks as he reviews the proceedings:

> The delegation had received no assurances whatsoever about any of the points they had been arguing and negogiating about for weeks and months. It took some time for the full implications to sink in across the country as a whole. Indeed, the first reacion of Conservatives and strikers throughout the land when the end of the strike was announced was that the TUC must have won a complete victory, or at least some significant concessions. Only later, when the full nature of the TUC's capitulation became clear, could Government supporters express their joy and the strikers their sense of shame and betrayal. But there was little they could do about it.[46]

As the delegation left the Prime Minister's house, Bevin exclaimed: "'We have committed suicide. Thousands of members will be victimised as a result of this day's work.'"[47]

Indeed, both the T.U.C. and organized labour were severely affected by the strike: membership fell by 500,000; funds dropped by a quarter.[48] Yet, as Renshaw says, near the end of his history of the strike, "the miners suffered more than anyone."[49] They did not return to work until at least six months later, when hunger and poverty finally drove them back, one by one, to an industry which neither Government nor owners had made any effort to change. They were forced to accept terms of hours and remuneration which were far worse than those that had preceded the strike. Furthermore, the working class as a whole not only suffered the immediate defeat of the outcome of the strike itself, but experienced a further weakening of its position in 1927, when general strikes were outlawed by Parliament's passing of the Trade Disputes and Trade Union Acts.

The immediate victor in the strike battle of 1926 appeared to be the establishment. But that victory (as Osbert Sitwell's account of the negotiations indicates) was clearly dependent on the co-operation of Thomas, the Labour M.P. who, after being courted vigorously by the wealthy mine owners and other influential figures at Wimbourne House, exerted pressure in turn on his colleagues in the T.U.C. general council and persuaded them to surrender their strike position.[50] Conjecture that the general council moved quickly to end the strike because, above all, it feared losing control of the strikers is substantiated by the fact that while the negotiations to end the dispute were proceeding, grass-roots support among the workers was mounting. The second-line workers called out on 11 May had demanded to be called out. None of the main regions showed signs of weakness:

> The TUC was being inundated with reports . . . which indicated that support for the strike showed no signs of slacking, that morale was excellent and that strikers were confident of victory.[51]

To see the role of Thomas and his T.U.C. general council associates as one of betrayal (as Lewis did) is not necessarily to overdramatize or falsify the situation as it developed. The strike provided Lewis with a vivid illustration of a phenomenon he himself railed against in *The Art of Being Ruled*: the plain-man suffering at the hands of his own leaders--leaders whom he had given too much power, in whom he had put too much faith. In the General Strike (which was an expression of the war between the wage-earner and the wealthy establishment, but the outcome of which was dependent on the decisions of men of neither group) Lewis perceived the emergence of a third powerful class: the labour magnates or the potential rulers of what later came to be called the welfare state (a condition which Lewis, of course, did not see in the traditional Whig manner, as a major step in the progress of human enlightenment).

The General Strike of 1926 effectively brought to an end what the historian T. O. Lloyd has called a "whole cycle of working-class militancy."[52] With the passing of the Trade Disputes and Trade Union Acts of 1927, it became obvious that the unions' only avenue of protest--indeed, their only means of survival--was in their alliance with the Labour Party, which itself benefited most of all--in the long run--from the strike. In his use of the General Strike as a metaphor for one of the final spasms of a dying era, Lewis expressed in *The Apes of God* his own perception of how the drama of contemporary political activity could be seen to demonstrate a transfer of power from the militant worker on the one hand and the wealthy member of the establishment on the other, to a group who parade (ironically, Lewis insisted) as servants of the People. The formation of the new power structure (as Lewis perceived it) would have, he believed, lasting adverse effects not only on the person of John Bull but also on the direction of English art and culture.

b. The General Strike in The Apes of God

The Apes of God begins with a vision of the demise of the Victorian aristocracy and the threat of a rising of a proletarian mass that is deceived, Lewis would contend, into perceiving itself as a viable replacement for the existing political and social establishment. The novel ends with the General Strike. The strike was in some ways a culmination of the social disruption that had begun in Britain even before the war; in Lewis's eyes it served to inaugurate a definably different era. Lewis's selection of the General Strike as a significant watershed in the history of the English people might be considered arbitrary by an historian of the period. His decision gains credibility, however, if it is understood that when Lewis weighed the impact of the domestic upheaval of 1926 he did so specifically in terms of his own articulated perception of contemporary political trends. The strike, after all, seemed to demonstrate the veracity of some of the ideas that had occupied his mind while he pondered the social and political conditions of the mid-1920s.

In The Art of Being Ruled, composed for the most part in 1925, Lewis had written extensively about the nature and dynamics of class-warfare and had predicted the insidiousness of the then-popular doctrine of syndicalism. There he had identified as the "key to all contemporary political thought,"[53] Georges Sorel, the chief advocate of syndicalist theory. When he spoke of Sorel's work, Lewis characteristically concentrated less on the particular matter of the philosopher's texts than on what he saw as the pernicious implications that would arise from the articulation and application of his doctrine of the strike as a revolutionary weapon. Lewis regarded Sorel's syndicalist philosophy as a flagrant exploitation of the revolutionary state of mind of modern western man. The syndicalist imperative of herding and manipulating (that is, the dominant notion that men should function together in the service of an abstract communal ideal, even at the expense of severe personal loss) was abhorrent to Lewis, for he perceived that the salvationist tactics suggested by the rulers--and would-be rulers--of the common man were, in many instances, little more than short-cuts to the slaughterhouse. Lewis, throughout his career, spoke of Sorel in words that are consistent with his description of him in Rude Assignment, where Lewis called him the "most shrewd and irresponsible" of all the "apostles of dangerous living, pure action, [and] 'heroism.'"[54] With his notion that the working man should seize power through the use of strikes and the general strike, Sorel was offering the working man a world that, in Lewis's opinion, was overly romantic and false. At the same time, he was inviting the kind of class-hatred and subsequent betrayal that was demonstrated in the surrender-betrayal of the General Strike of 1926. For in The Art of Being Ruled Lewis warned again and again that the syndicalist cause and method did not in fact tend to serve the people it was said to serve. In fact, Lewis believed that syndicalists like Sorel, in their advocation of proletarian revolution, bore a close resemblance to warmongers in that they tended to promote and direct combat or revolution for what were in the end "their own unpleasant ends."[55]

The apprehensions and predictions regarding syndicalism that Lewis articulated in The Art of Being Ruled were borne out to a large degree in the 1926 General Strike, an event more or less universally acknowledged by scholars of the period as an unprecedented landmark in the history of the British working class. In fact, the tragedy of the strike--which ultimately involved those aligned on both sides of the struggle--was even more devastating than Lewis had imagined. As the wealthy and established members of the upper ranks of society so valiantly stepped into the roles of lorry-drivers and dock-workers (in defence of the constitution!), they acknowledged that their long-standing aloofness from these modes of physical labour was artificial. Furthermore (true to the extravagant form of the popular contemporary fad: the masquerade party) they symbolically played out, Lewis thought, the crumbling of their position as a privileged class by re-enacting the pre-Revolutionary activity of the French court and thus (still on a symbolic level) evoking similar consequences.

The analogy which Lewis suggests existed between the pre-revolutionary state of eighteenth-century France and the period of unrest in twentieth-century Britain is alluded to in The Apes of God when Margolin addresses Peters, the Finnian Shaw butler, and taunts him about "a proper revolution in Old London Town" (Apes, 434/453). Lewis's suggested analogy is not restricted, however, to obscure references in the text of the novel. His own Arthur Press edition of The Apes of God is introduced by the following blurb on the front flap of its dust-wrapper:

> The dramatis personae--members of the gossip-column class. . . --are shown in that condition of violent restlessness imposed upon them by the instability of the time. Immersed in the make-believe of the adult nursery, described in the Art of Being Ruled, all have become 'irresponsible baby-boys and baby-girls,' in the same way that the French Court, in the days before the Revolution, dressed themselves as shepherds and shepherdesses in their fêtes champêtres.[56]

Although the tragedy of the General Strike has consistently been identified with the fate of the labourer, the unfortunate implications of that social and political upheaval extended, in Lewis's eyes, to the whole spectrum of British society. The Apes of God is (as Lewis indicates on the dust-wrapper of the first edition) a portrayal of the final gay moments of a leisure class whose existence--as a class--is effectively terminated during the restlessness of the post-war period. Although the strike initially dealt a hard blow to the trades union movement, it functioned in the long run to strengthen the official Labour position and so, in effect, to dismantle the rigid hierarchies that had defined English social life since feudal times.

The loosening of the social structures resulted not in a dissolution, but rather in a redefinition of the English class-system. The modern Englishman, Lewis wrote in 1938, could be newly-defined as "the Middle-class Milord, the Clubman without birth but with a rich, fruity, condescending voice," or as "his partner, the Man on the Dole."[57] "Class" as it had been known became a myth[58] as the traditional establishment with aristocratic roots was superseded by a "mercantile and financial bourgeoisie."[59] Labour, which was, Lewis suggested during the early years of the Second World War, "more conservative than a Lord in Waiting,"[60] did not represent an alternative to the oligarchy of the "great lords of Business and Finance."[61] It was, Lewis insisted, an ironically-named "by-product of our ramshackle social system," for, he said, "[t]he British Labour Party' . . . is as blandly callous to the interests of the Poor and the distressed, as is the smuggest, most bridge-playing and golfing, of well-to-do 'Madames.'"[62]

The General Strike "marked the end, and not the beginning, of a time of unrest and possible revolution,"[63] says C. L. Mowat in his history of the period. It came to represent economic defeat and political disillusionment for the struggling working classes, and social and political displacement for the wealthy establishment. The strike dramatized, for Lewis, how the power inherent in both revolution and tradition passed from the lower and upper classes to a middle-class oligarchy that expressed its own newly-acquired forcefulness in terms of management and finance.

The General Strike provided Lewis with a metaphorical model of what he perceived as the nature and shape of the socio-political struggles that would inevitably paralyze the English and produce what Derek Fraser has called "a demoralised, not a revolutionary, nation."[64] In The Apes of God Lewis reports, paradoxically, that during the strike the "whole townland of London was up in arms and as silent as the grave" (Apes, 618/643). Evoking the abortive nature of the strike, he describes the world ushered in by that event in terms of silence and death:

> all was dead and pleasant. But it was a death of life--the throbbing circulation of incessant machines, in thunderous rotation, in the arteries of London was stopped. (Apes, 619/643)

In the midst of this inactivity, on the "Private Road" leading to the Follett estate, stand a "top-hatted long-coated gatekeeper" and a "pale cockney policeman" (Apes, 619/644). As they look out into the thoroughfare; they occasionally see evidence of the strike: "the occasional vans that passed fitted with cross benches for passengers" (Apes, 619/644). While these two representatives of the society's establishment and its proletariat stand by, members of the middle-class ride through the conflict "advertising their useful intentions--carrying motorless clerks to wealthy offices" (Apes, 619/644). Both the gatekeeper and the constable reflect in their postures the disease of social apathy and decay which set in after the strike to waste the warring factions:

> The top-hatted gatekeeper was royalist and rothschildean, and the cockney constable was communist. But the constable did not expect much from a Soviet of Constables (he had thought it best, that was all, to be on the safe side) so he was fairly rothschildean and royalist, though not so sternly so as the other guardian of the Private Road beside him--who was a sterling class-A watch-dog of the Pound Sterling when met with in regal bulk and ten-figure quantity, and a cast-iron King's-man to the core. So the constable who was languidly muscovite and luke-warmly royalist, and his uniform was very heavy, seemed to take an interest in nothing, whereas the top-hatted gatekeeper seemed sternly indifferent to everything. (Apes, 620/644-45)

B. ATTENDANTS

While it had not been passionately the fashion to be an artist or a genius in 1920, certainly it was by 1926.

-- Robert McAlmon, Being Geniuses Together (1938)

9. PIERPOINT

Wyndham Lewis's presence in The Apes of God is most often associated with the elusive figure of Pierpoint, the master, the "invisible magnifico" (Apes, 607/[631]) frequently referred to in the novel, but never actually seen. Pierpoint's voice is heard, however, first of all in the words of the fragment of the encyclical that Zagreus hands on to Dan and then through the numerous "broadcasts" provided by Pierpoint's two "great understudies" (Apes, 607/[631]), Zagreus and Bertram Starr-Smith. The theories and concepts that Pierpoint's followers articulate on his behalf consist of paraphrases of explicitly Lewisian notions, as numerous critics have suggested. Indeed, there can be little doubt that Pierpoint functions as his author's mouthpiece. But the role of this "Great Absentee" (Apes, 261/274) in the novel is not as straightforward as that. He is at once a mouthpiece and a parody of a mouthpiece; his opinions are disseminated via "broadcasts" that are themselves effective parodies of wireless radio transmissions.

The voice of the radio, as is said in The Apes of God, is one to which the listener "can't reply . . . only listen" (Apes, 375/392). Insofar as this is so, Pierpoint functions within the context of the novel itself as a manifestation of absolutism, contributing by means of his method to the standardization and vulgarization of thought. (It is not accidental that Zagreus, even as he recites verbatim the words of his mentor, misunderstands the content of what he utters into his imaginary transmitter.)

Pierpoint's two voices, in the persons of Zagreus, arch-vulgarizer and impersonator, the supreme member of the "ape-herd" (Apes, 296/310) and Starr-Smith or Blackshirt, political secretary and man of business, define his two potential spheres of influence. It is in relation to his dual nature that this elusive character is most interesting, for "Pierpoint," while being the name of the public hangman in England in 1930,[1] was probably most widely recognized as the namesake of J. Pierpont Morgan (1837-1913), renowned banker and art connoisseur, whose influence exerted in the realms of practical politics and art (by virtue of his unprecedented role in high finance) was without equal in his time. In 1895, for example, he established a syndicate which put a stop to the drain of gold from the United States government gold reserves to effectively relieve a Treasury crisis. Through J. P. Morgan and Company, he presided over one of the world's most powerful banking houses, the major source of United States government financing in the late nineteenth century. Needless to say, the fact that he controlled a large portion of the money put to the service of the government--especially after a major U.S. financial crisis in 1907--allowed him to play a dominant role in decisions regarding government spending. A pioneer in the formation of industrial consolidations (including U.S. Steel, International Harvester, General Electric), he came to be recognized as a disproportionately powerful influence in the country's most important corporations and financial institutions: he became a symbol of the "money trust."[2]

After his death in 1913, the Burlington magazine said of J. Pierpont Morgan: "'Having become the greatest financier of his age, he determined to be the greatest [art] collector.'"[3] He had, in 1871, taken part in the organization of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and by 1904 had become its "president, wholesale benefactor, and supreme ruler."[4] His personal art collection was estimated (when he died) to be worth between twenty and fifty million dollars.

If the name "Pierpoint" in The Apes of God can be regarded as a deliberate allusion to Pierpont Morgan, the invisible magnifico comes to represent--on at least one level--what Lewis saw as the increasingly significant exercise of power (both political and cultural) by those few individuals who occupied what he called "the Bankers Olympus."[5] In this context the image of Pierpoint is an appropriate one: he is the invisible god-like dictator presiding over what Lewis regarded as the rampant economic and cultural decay that accompanied the growth of collectivism in the realms of practical politics and intellect.

10. DAN

a. The "poor human dumb animal" as Victim

The short five-page section of *The Apes of God* in which Dan Boleyn is "warned for duty at Lord Osmund's" is the first of two narrative episodes prefatory to the lenten party, an event which is to mark the "grand culmination" of Dan's apprenticeship. Zagreus, in his written instructions for the party, promises: "If you come through this with flying colours you may regard yourself as a Bachelor of the Gentle Art of Bearding the Ape in his Drawing-room" (*Apes*, 322/338). Alas, Dan never gets his "degree." After suffering the indignity of Mrs. Bosun's closet and the humiliation of Harry Caldicott's attempted seduction, he disrupts the entertainment and embarrasses Horace by bleeding through the boards of the cupboard in the middle of the vanish. Shortly afterwards, on the advice of Blackshirt and with the approval of Pierpoint, Zagreus cashiers him.

Dan's dismissal and the state of loneliness and isolation he experiences after the agonies of the lenten party itself are prefigured in a number of events in this chapter. He is startled, at the outset, by the elaborate chauffeur's disguise--complete with conning-cap and dust-goggles--of Horace's messenger. This overbearing factotum called Willie Service (supposedly, he-who-is-willing-to-serve) is a precursor of the gentlemen driving vans and cars who later so rudely accost and intimidate Dan when he walks the streets of London alone and bewildered during the General Strike. Service's bombastic appearance, Dan observes, bodes "no good for anybody, least of all himself" (*Apes*, 319/[335]). Shaken by Service's appearance, Dan drops the philosopher's egg Service brings him and so metaphorically opens himself to calamity. When Service, observing with annoyance the crushed mediæval talisman at his feet, threatens to leave Dan to his fate, Dan's nose begins to bleed, revealing the personal vulnerability which later--during the vanish--effectively contributes to Horace's dismissal of him. Finally, the end of his period of tutelage is foreshadowed in Horace's reference, in his directions for the party, to "a very brilliant young man indeed" (Apes, 322/338) who will usurp Dan's role as Horace's genius-in-embryo: Archie Margolin. Dan, to whom Horace recently had been "terribly unkind" (Apes, 321/337), had just met Margolin and found him "extremely objectionable" (Apes, 321/337). Still, he looks forward naively to his role in the lenten party entertainment:

> Even the prospect of the presence of Margolin did not throw a shadow. Horace had selected for him a simple part, where he would not have to walk about too much and make his feet sore and even in that Horace showed his thought for him. Dear Horace! Dear Horace!--(Apes, 323/339)

After the party, Dan, bewildered and demoralized by Zagreus's fierce castigation of his actions and character, and by the events of his journey, shrinks, not only from the world around him (which he had always found intimidating), but also from the image of himself projected by his stern mentor:

> So who could this ruffian be who was the villain of this awful epistle? He was that fellow! It was Dan who was that who could doubt? And thereupon he was so frightened of himself and his wild ways, that he jumped when he so much as moved a little brusquely, and expected that he might be the victim from one moment to the next of his own lawless arms and hands. (Apes, 612/636)

If the lenten party is, as Zagreus puts it, "the greatest battue of full-grown man-eating" (Apes, 322/338), it is Dan above all who is consumed. Dan Boleyn, unsuspecting and easily led, functions finally in the novel as an innocent victim of the effluvium of decadence and decay he had been instructed to observe but consistently failed to comprehend. Deserted by Zagreus and his cronies--the embodiments of the very forces in the novel that ultimately violate the misguided plain-man[1]--he sets out in the end for the south of France, where he will stay with Mélanie Blackwell, who had warned him about Zagreus before his journey had even begun:

> 'Dan you are so incredibly helpless! I had better tell you at once. Horace Zagreus has a very bad reputation. He is not a suitable friend for any young man, let alone one like you who does not know how to take care of himself more than a baby at the breast.' (Apes, 98/106)
>
> 'He's only laughing at you Dannie, can't you see that darling--Horace has kissed the Blarney Stone and everything to him is a joke that is all! He's pulling your leg my poor angel!' (Apes, 128/136-37)

Mélanie's previous admonitions had offered Dan no protection from Horace. Nor was her raping, brutal attack on his chastity, with her "white-kid-skinned" hands, her "army of maternal fingers" that marched "against his modesty" (Apes, 106-7/115), the kind of hospitality he had expected from her when in a state of fatigue and desperation he wandered onto the grounds of her house on Sharratt Hill. He had been, as Lewis expresses it, "the virgin victim" of "the harlot-woman" (Apes, 108/116):

> Off with your lips the harlot-woman! Off with the sticky and shameless mouth of you!--his disgust knew no bounds, he spat on the pillow. He heaved up the desecrated head of him out of reach of her lips, the whore of Babylon. . . . (Apes, 108/116)

It is in relation to Mélanie, "the whore of Babylon," that Dan's first name takes on some significance. That it occurred to Lewis to make a connection between Dan and the Biblical character who is delivered from the lion's den is suggested by the author's early notes for The Apes of God where he recorded, for possible future use, the heading, "Daniel in the Ape's den."[2] It was Babylon, of course--the symbol of corruption--to which the children of Israel (the young Daniel among them) were carried captive for their sins of idolatry. At the end of The Apes of God Dan is invited by Mélanie's degenerate friend, Michael, "the russian drug-pimp" (Apes, 115/123), to come with him to Mélanie's foreign estate. It is difficult to think otherwise than that as just punishment for his worshipping at the altar of the false god (Zagreus), Dan the plain-man, the naif, is, like his Biblical namesake, being carried into exile and captivity in Babylon, the apotheosis of evil, the mother of harlots, the defiler of the virgin.

b. The Reluctant Model

Whether Dan Boleyn is drawn from a particular human model, or whether he is, as Chapman says of Lady Fredigonde, "not 'taken from' anyone"[3] remains to be determined. Philip J. Lanthier, in a statement in his 1972 Ph.D. dissertation for the University of Toronto entitled "Vision and Satire in the Art and Fiction of Wyndham Lewis" suggests that Dan is derived from Stephen Spender. He fails to qualify his remark, however, so one cannot know on what he based his assessment.[4] More recently, Spender himself, in an interview with Lewis's biographer, Jeffrey Meyers, "wryly agreed that Dan Boleyn was based on himself" and that he "was amused by his fictional image."[5]

It is doubtful--in spite of Spender's remarks--that Boleyn was taken whole from any one particular real-life model. It is likely, moreover, that some of the most humorous nuances of Boleyn's character and situation, especially in the narrative sequence entitled "Lesbian-Ape," are derived from Lewis's knowledge of Ronald Firbank[6] and especially from his own experience (later recorded in Blasting & Bombardiering) of drawing Firbank's portrait.[7] The reluctant artist's model who blushes "down to his waist line" (Apes, 228/240) on the model's-throne, where he stands "limply," his head "turned in the opposite direction from the watching [artist], his body drooped in profile" (Apes, 228/240) is reminiscent of Firbank, whose figure was "inclined to droop" and who was, according to one commentator, remembered for his "extreme shyness" by all who knew him.[8] Augustus John, for example, recollects how Firbank fled from him after they encountered each other in Bond Street one day. Rushing away, Firbank covered his face with his hand and declared that he was not fit to be seen.[9] John recalls also Firbank's nervousness as a model, and states that when "the strain of confronting me became unbearable, he would seek refuge in the lavatory, there to wash his hands. This manoeuvre occurred several times at each sitting."[10] Remembering his own attempt to draw Firbank's portrait, Lewis wrote, in Blasting & Bombardiering:

> We started off by my getting him up on the model's throne, an operation demanding a certain tact. He was afraid he might fall off. He fluttered at the thought of so much self-exposure.[11]

Recalling, perhaps, how he himself felt compelled to threaten and beat Firbank with his mahlstick if he would not be still, Lewis has Dan recoil in terror at the sight of the dog-whip which the lesbian-ape keeps on the floor of the model-throne. Firbank, Lewis says, "writhed about on his chair . . . twisted and tossed"[12] while he was being drawn. Similarly, Boleyn sways "from side to side, with more and more giddy abandon" (Apes, 231/243) while the lesbian-ape sketches his figure.

Dan Boleyn's identification with Ronald Firbank is reinforced by the fact that aside from Dan's behaviour in the lesbian-ape episode in the novel, his character in general probably evoked the image of Firbank in the minds of contemporary readers. Certainly Osbert Sitwell's description of the timid Firbank, for example, provides a succinct summary of the reader's impression of Lewis's fictional creation:

> One would have taken him, the moment one saw him, as plainly destined to be defrauded or, if necessary, murdered, so weak and helpless did he appear, so obvious a victim for guile and violence.[13]

The strong traces of Firbank in the text, together with Spender's remarks, suggest that Dan's is a composite portrait, drawn from several models and made to represent Lewis's projection of the plain-man, the helpless, simpering, idiotic animal human average described in various of the works Lewis composed in the 1920s. Certainly, he shares the physical features that characterize his type: the wide, blank eyes and fleshy, gaping mouth. Dan is described in The Apes of God as a "poor human dumb animal" (Apes, 98/106): the "lips . . . open, the eyes . . . slightly rolled up as with a half-woken dog" (Apes, 104/112).

11. MATTHEW

As early as 1918, with the publication of *Tarr*, Wyndham Lewis articulated some of his reasons for regarding the peculiarly dilettantish approach of the Bloomsbury artist as having negative cultural and political implications.[1] Tarr, with whom Lewis associated himself in the novel, addresses Hobson, a dilettante whose connections with Cambridge suggest that he is meant to be identified with the Bloomsbury set:[2]

> 'You represent, my dear fellow, the *dregs* of Anglo-Saxon civilisation!=There is nothing softer on earth. =Your flabby potion is a mixture of the lees of Liberalism, the poor froth blown off the decadent nineties, the wardrobe-leavings of a vulgar Bohemianism with its headquarters in Chelsea!
>
> 'You are concentrated, systematic slop.=There is nothing in the Universe to be said for you.=Any efficient State would confiscate your property, burn your wardrobe, that old hat and the rest, as "*infecte*" and insanitary, and prohibit you from propagating.'
>
> Tarr's white collar shone dazzlingly in the sun.= His bowler hat bobbed and cut clean lines as he spoke.
>
> 'A breed of mild pervasive cabbages has set up a wide and creeping rot in the West of Europe.=They make it indirectly a peril and tribulation for live things to remain in the neighbourhood.
>
> You are systematizing and vulgarizing the individual.= You are not an individual. You have, I repeat, no right to that hair and that hat. You are trying to have the apple and eat it, too.=You should be in uniform, and at work, *not* uniformly *out of uniform*, and libelling the Artist by your idleness.[3]

Lewis's own past experiences with prominent Bloomsbury figures (most notably, his involvement with Roger Fry in the Omega affair in 1913) would have contributed to his response to the group as a whole.[4] In Lewis's eyes, Fry as critic came to represent British amateurism;[5] he was, Lewis later said, "all for the amateur, all for the eternal Child" and "wished to make of the painting-world of London a tight little right little world, safe for the amateur to live in."[6] As an artist, Fry was, Lewis stated in *The Tyro*, No. 1, "much the most important of his Bloomsbury painting colleagues,"[7] but his ideas and his significant influence[8] in the art world were dangerous, Lewis insisted, to the well-being of English art. Certainly Fry and his disciple, Clive Bell, in their art criticism, tended not to speak favourably about the work of English artists (aside from productions by members of their own clique) and so failed to endear themselves to Lewis, who perceived himself to be something of a champion of the survival of English art and letters.[9]

Roger Fry and Clive Bell make only fleeting appearances in The Apes of God. Fry appears as Roger Bulwer, who keeps "his victorian wig of a long haired 'great man'" (Apes, 61/67) on his window-sill at night;[10] Bell, as Bulwer Bell, who splutters "frenchily" as he roams around "in his brocaded dressing-gown, with his little cane" (Apes, 61/67). Neither of the Bloomsbury critics figure as models for any of the prominent characters in the novel, despite the fact that the master-disciple relationship between Zagreus and Dan is evocative of Fry's relationship with Duncan Grant (whom Lewis refers to as Bloomsbury's "darling star-performer").[11] Fry, says Lewis (presumably referring to the Fry-Grant association), "loves too well to unearth some tiny personality and call him 'genius' for a while: some personality that is quiet and obedient, and that does not interfere with his dream."[12]

The Bloomsburies as a whole did not entirely escape significant inclusion in The Apes of God, however; Lytton Strachey, whom Lewis later referred to as the group's "founder and principal prophet,"[13] figures prominently as Matthew Plunkett. Lewis probably chose to caricature the Bloomsbury biographer because Strachey was, in Lewis's estimation, the "impersonification of all that was most Bloomsburyish."[14] Moreover, Lewis wrote (probably in 1934), Strachey's influence on young and impressionable artists and writers contemporary with the heydays of early Bloomsbury resulted in his effecting a new sort of bohemian. In his pallid laboratory, he invented, Lewis said, a "sort of patent intellectual-man . . . a kind of shrinking, simpering, stammering, blinking, wide-eyed and moist-lipped robot."[15]

Strachey's "patent Bloomsbury robot[s]"[16] were not to be confused, Lewis insisted, with the original Bloomsburies, whom Lewis defined for his purposes as "the families of Stracheys, Stephens, Frys, Keyneses, and Bells" (along with Duncan Grant) who lived "above the melée, in the peaceful garden-squares of Victorian Bloomsbury--all in little 'rooms of their own.'"[17]

> Strachey had . . . put on the market a patent, a receipt, rather, guaranteed to produce a very passable highbrow robot; a robot who could affect all the outward mannerisms of a super-sensitive artist-nature, without however being able to do anything at all--in the matter of art. Indeed it was essential that he should not do anything in that line, for that would be to descend into the disgusting pupping and spawning state of the 'creative' person, or the extremely vulgar perspirational state of mind and body of the mere efficient executant. . . . And I am acquainted personally [Lewis stated] with several gentlemen (whom I could name if I wished) who without ever having been admitted to, or even been put-up for, 'Bloomsbury,' have to perfection the stammering and halting, blinking and blushing habits of a B. to the manner-born.[18]

More than a decade earlier, in his "Editorial" for The Tyro No. 2 (1922) Lewis had characterized this new presence in the art landscape of London as:

> that unfortunate organization of amateurs--banded together to the ends and for the decrepit joys of amateurishness--that men call, for want of a better

> word, Bloomsburies, infect this healthy but rather too large society. The instinct of the weak and foolish to get very close to each other has functioned in them to perfection; they are a little society of inseparables; they drift up the street hand in hand and wide-eyed, while Mr. Clive Bell curvets in front of them, turns somersaults and cracks jokes with the passers-by. . . .[19]

It was this new breed of dilettante with which Lewis concerned himself when in 1934 he recorded his impressions of the original Bloomsburies and their influence. His comments--part of a discourse on the state of the arts (a discourse which had by then continued for twenty years since his Blast period)--are enlightening with regard to The Apes of God, especially because the image he uses to describe these inheritors of the manners of Bloomsbury is the same as that he employed a score of years later, when he prepared his introduction to the twenty-fifth anniversary edition of the novel. In both cases Lewis borrows his central metaphor from the science of bacteriology and, referring to the influence on culture of Strachey's new strain of diletantes, he speaks of the danger of "infection by virulent human toxins."[20]

> But these are small and rather impalpable fry--true filter-passers. . . . I would not on account of their insignificant scale give them the go-by, believe me. I am thoroughly embued with the spirit of bacteriological research--I do not regard the big-game hunter as a better man than Pasteur, in fine! Nor do I tend--as I cannot help remarking is the case with most people--to underrate the deadly power of numbers of low-grade organisms.[21]

It is, not insignificantly, low-grade organisms--"the twisted relics of little life--cartonnages of molluscs, an orchestra of whispering toy-trumpets, corkscrew-curls, stars and thimbles" (Apes, 59/[65])--that interest the character in The Apes of God modelled on Strachey: Matthew Plunkett, the apprentice of biology, the student of "shell-making and excretion" (Apes, 79/86). Like the patent-robots that Strachey creates in his "laboratory," the cowrie-shells and other shells that Matthew has imported for his laboratory research issue forth abruptly in Lewis's mind as an overwhelming symbol of power:

> The Bloomsbury square . . . came to life (at Matthew Plunkett's emergence as he stepped boldly out) with a terrible explosion, between the wheels of a Shell-van full of petrol-tins, nosing its way round the railings. Vans simply farted and passed on he thought, as he jumped up a little, as though he were shot, and his pulse clanged in his heart, upon the second step. SHELL IS SO DIFFERENT! (Apes, 60-61/67)

> [T]here was a sharp explosion. That van again! Like a bad penny, cracking off as it went, the thing had turned up. It had rushed past him with its bomb. SHELL IS SO DIFFERENT! (Apes, 73/80)

The geological processes that contribute to the formation of petroleum--the subject of Matthew's research--demonstrate Lewis's principle (developed in his discussions of the Bloomsburies, and in The Apes of God) about the potential power inherent in the cumulative activity of great numbers of seemingly insignificant organisms (or robot-dilettantes).

Plunkett, as a character, lies outside the central action of the novel. That is, he is not one of the apes Zagreus sends Dan to observe. Yet, as an apprentice of biological and geological science, he takes on significance at the novel's end, when petrol, the product of research such as his, surfaces dramatically as a powerful force in the disruptive atmosphere of the General Strike. Petroleum is an appropriate power-metaphor for the period of time about which Lewis is writing. If 1926 was a watershed in English political history (as Lewis believed it was) it was partly because of the presence of this substance which had become an energy-alternative to coal--"SHELL IS SO DIFFERENT!"

To say that Lewis's decision to make Plunkett a budding geologist working in a laboratory is in fact related to his parallel description of Strachey as a white-coated inventor of a particular kind of amateurism is not to place a strain on the text of The Apes of God. Lewis seems to be suggesting that the somewhat indirect effect of Plunkett's research into crustaceans in the political world of the novel is, through the metaphor of the industrious inventor in his lab, analogous to Strachey's influence in the world of letters in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

* * *

By describing Matthew Plunkett, in "The Virgin," as a stumbling "half scowling tramp-comedian, half baby-boy" (Apes, 62/68) and referring to his "bowed" shoulders (Apes, 62/68), his "invalid posture" (Apes, 68/74), his "limp trunk" (Apes,68/75), and his "drooped, limp, swan-wristed hand" (Apes, 59/[65]), Lewis creates a figure whose physical appearance is evocative of Lytton Strachey as he was seen by his contemporaries. H. A. L. Fisher, for example, remembers Strachey as "'a sensitive ungainly youth; awkward in his bearing, and presenting an appearance of great physical debility, as if he had recently risen from the bed of an invalid.'"[22] Cecil Beaton describes him as a person who "'could be even twice his height if he were not bent as a sloppy asparagus,'" one whose "'huge hands fall to his sides, completely limp.'"[23] A further clue to Matthew Plunkett's identity as Strachey is the appearance of his girlfriend, Betty Bligh, whom Lewis portrays as:

> short and slight, to the point of being the doll-woman. This was an all-puppet cast. In her features as well as in stature Miss Bligh was the four-foot-ten adult-tot in toto, stunted at the mark of her fifteenth summer, with ears and nose of a waxen smallness. (Apes, 81/88)

The model for this "doll-faced girl,"[24] as Strachey's gossipy biographer, Michael Holroyd, calls her, was Dora Carrington,[25] an ex-Slade student Strachey met in 1915, during what Holroyd calls "a certain week-end which set in motion seismic repercussions that were to reshape the entire story of the last sixteen years of his life."[26]

It is the nature of the association between Plunkett and Bligh that identifies these characters most unequivocally with the homosexual Strachey and his long-time companion. Holroyd, who spends some time recording the details of the unorthodox Strachey/Carrington liaison, comments on Lewis's use and abuse of it in The Apes of God. He refers to Lewis's interpretation of the relationship as "ingeniously malevolent":[27]

> A somewhat scatterbrained and less sympathetic interpretation of their attachment has been put forward by Percy Wyndham Lewis, who diagnosed it simply as a father-daughter association, which Lytton embarked on in order to assert his revolutionary spirit of pseudo-manhood, and Carrington to establish, rather belatedly, the parental dominance which had been absent from her childhood. In his novel, The Apes of God, this arch-enemy of Bloomsbury culture--or of the 'Pansy-clan' as he liked collectively to call its tribesmen--has given a maliciously distorted and hilarious caricature of Lytton under the name of Matthew Plunkett. The crane-like Plunkett walks with an affected anarchical gait, adopts mannerisms reminiscent of his father, puts on in front of strangers an owlish ceremony of regulation shyness, and articulates with two distinct voices, one a high-piping vixenish shriek, the other of a more fastidious percussion--'a nasal stammer modelled upon the effects of severe catarrh'. Being a modern man much taken up with modern psychology, this hero conceives the intensely original idea of submitting himself to psychoanalytical treatment in the Zürich

> consulting-den of the Jewish Dr. Frumpfsusan--an extravagant notion obviously suggested to Wyndham Lewis by the career of James Strachey, Freud's pupil and English-language translator. . . .
>
> It was . . . on doctor's orders that Plunkett took up with Betty Blyth, his Carrington-like girl friend, a petite doll-woman. Of the magical puppet prescription, her preternaturally tiny figure was dwarfed by the fairy giant of this Bloomsbury legend, who, towering far above her, would strive to assume the swaggering, buccaneering manner of the more flamboyant extrovert.[28]

As Holroyd states, Matthew Plunkett's "acquisition of an awed and submissive girl friend . . . was meant to conceal his dandified homosexuality."[29] There is much humour in Lewis's description of Plunkett's meticulously-engineered sexual response to his tiny lady friend:

> But at last he seemed to have struck something. There was a spark at least.
>
> He felt a distinct vibration, in the recalcitrant depths of his person. Something was not quite as it formerly was or he was very much mistaken. In portentous slow-movement of gruelling close-up, his lips forced out to forestall the contact, he approached the rose-bud mouth beneath by the fatal sinking of his head down upon hers. With awful slowness the four lips met. He closed in lower down at the contact. He experienced a second spark.
>
> Now really flushed with triumph, he introduced a hand beneath her jumper. He felt her delicate toy-spine, as cool as alabaster, as neat as the couplings of a small boy's locomotive. There was a distinct vibration throughout or in many distinct parts of his person.
>
> The bookworm shoulders rolled above the ravishing toy-girl, like impending seas above a pygmy skiff: in hooligan hardiness he clutched the little skull, he had the sensation of great knees sticking out, giant toe-tendons clenching in the rough workman's footwear: many flattering indications of a probable event were distinctly signalled, as he thought, sluggish but sure, from the most improbable centres--there was really a palpable stir, if not in the true sense a bustle. Betty at that moment when his eyes first fell upon her a trimestre since was to be his true helpmeet something had told him: a really natural dawn of love was at hand, beyond question--the sun's red and swollen rim was visible, low down in the atmosphere, the tip of the fiery Phoebus, pushing up over the chilly

> horizon. Soon the entire valley would be flooded with his bounteous rays.
>
> In every way [he was] reinforced in the conviction that the Great Day had sounded and the hour of triumph struck-- (Apes, 90-91/97-98)

Matthew's sexual arousal is short-lived, for as he carries Betty "fiercely into the bedroom upon staggering legs" (Apes, 91/99), he is brought to a standstill by the presence in his bed of Dan Boleyn, a former boyfriend. Abruptly, Lewis reports, "the sluggish metaphoric tide froze and then turned back. . . . Matthew simply dropped Betty--all that was about to be between them was over now in any case" (Apes, 91/99). Plunkett proceeds to throw out his intruder, Boleyn, and never appears in the novel again.

Plunkett/Strachey is unequivocally identified with, indeed representative of Bloomsbury (the "old Bloomsbury" [Apes, 124/132] of the Stracheys, Woolfs, Bells, and Frys). Lewis, besides alluding to Bloomsbury throughout the narrative segment in which Plunkett appears, refers to him directly as "Good-boy Bloomsbury" (Apes, 83/90), "little Bloomsbury" (Apes, 86/93), and, simply, "Bloomsbury" (Apes, 88/95). Among Plunkett's facial gestures, Lewis catalogues a "Bloomsbury blink" (Apes, 84/92) and a "Bloomsbury grimace" (Apes, 88/95). Yet, in spite of Plunkett's strong association with what most commentators regard as a primary satirical target in the novel, he is not presented as an active member of the ape community through which Dan Boleyn is later directed (by Zagreus) to wander. In fact, he is not even portrayed as a person involved with the arts at all.

Lewis makes it quite clear in the encyclical that in The Apes of God he did not intend primarily to expose and ridicule the Bloomsbury that had been reigned over by Lytton Strachey. The major figures of what Lewis referred to as "old Bloomsbury" had exerted their influence on the arts for more than a decade and it was a new generation of bohemians whose conduct Lewis caricatured in his satire of 1930. Of the Bloomsbury of Strachey, Woolf, and Fry he wrote:

> altogether too many Apes and wealthy 'intelligentsia' have come on the scene for them to have maintained their unique position. I think you can disregard them. Bloomsbury is really only what is called 'old Bloomsbury', which is very moribund--the bloom is gone. (Apes, 124/132)

It is appropriate, then, that the structural position and narrative context of the Plunkett episode suggests that "old Bloomsbury" (Apes, 124/132) is not meant to be confused with the "ever-swelling tribe of mock artists" (Apes, 124/133) that concerned Lewis. "Part 2. The Virgin" functions neither as part of the novel's frame (that is, the prologue and its narrative extension: the section entitled "Dick" and the prologue's companion-piece, "The General Strike") nor as part of its picaresque narrative centre. Structurally, the Plunkett episode is peripheral to the directed tour through what Lewis, in the Cornell papers, refers to as the "apery,"[30] and so Matthew Plunkett, the epitome of old Bloomsbury, is placed outside the margins of the primary thrust of Lewis's satire on the London art world.

C. THE APES

> My voice will have to serve for the present there is no other. . . . I lay no claim to being a disinterested party or to being a pure servant of the Law. I am a partisan. Satire, so-called, is one of my trades.
>
> --Wyndham Lewis, Men Without Art (1934)

12. DICK

a. The Fund and After

Among the mutual acquaintances mentioned in Violet Schiff's letters to Wyndham Lewis in the 1920s was a young admirer of Lewis, Richard Wyndham, whose father, Guy Wyndham had married Violet's niece (Ada Leverson's daughter), Violet.[1] Wyndham was one of a group of friends who in the fall of 1923 established a fund which was intended to alleviate some of Lewis's financial worries and so leave him free to carry out the so often unremunerative work he was committed to doing. The subscribers to the monthly cheque of £16 included, besides Wyndham, Edward and Fanny Wadsworth and Raymond and Anne Drey. Wadsworth, the painter, had been an associate of Lewis at least since the Omega Workshop. (He had seceded with Lewis in 1913 to found the Rebel Art Centre.) His wife, Fanny, and Lewis carried on an amicable social correspondence in the early 1920s. Drey, an art critic, was author of a pamphlet about Edward Wadsworth and a contributor to *The Tyro* Nos. 1 and 2. Lewis had known his wife, Anne Estelle Rice, early in the century, as a Fauvist painter in Paris.[2] Wyndham himself was a young member of the establishment[3] who had become an ardent admirer--a kind of disciple--of Lewis. He had social ties not only with the Schiffs and the Wadsworths, but also with the Sitwells through Sacheverell, with whom he later collaborated on *A Book of Towers and other Buildings of Southern Europe*: "A series of dry-points engraved by R. Wyndham. With an introduction and brief descriptions by Sacheverell Sitwell" (1928).

The fund established by the group was administered successfully by Fanny Wadsworth for several months, until the spring of 1924, when a misunderstanding arose between Fanny and Lewis. The dispute and resultant breach of friendship seems to have been related, at least in part, to Lewis's continuing inability to rid himself of all financial problems: he had asked for "advances" or arranged for loans from individual subscribers in excess of and extraneous to the fund and so caused disruption to an orderly administration of payments. He had also caused confusion by requesting changes in the established day on which installments were to be paid.

The original arrangement was that cheques for the full amount would be sent to Lewis regularly on the first of every month. When Lewis, at his own request (according to Fanny's letter to him of 16 April 1924), received the April installment on the 20th of March but failed to regard the early payment as an advance resulting in a six-week rather than a four-week interim between cheques, things came to a head, specifically when on 15 April 1924 he sent a telegram to Fanny saying: "Please send money by Wyndham's Squib to 61."[4] Exasperated by what she perceived as the curt and presumptuous tone of Lewis's telegram and by his interference with the original terms of the agreement, Fanny expressed her frustration to her fellow-subscriber, Richard Wyndham. Lewis, confused by her reaction and angered by what he regarded as Fanny's deliberate attempt to jeopardize his relationship with Wyndham, wrote to her:

> In the restaurant last night I met Dick, who when I referred to the matter of the monthly cheque said he would 'talk to me about that another time.' As this naturally perplexed me, I went to see him afterwards (at the time I was with somebody and I could not ask him then, nor could be inform me.) He then told me what you had said about my telegram.

First we will deal with the telegram. You appeared to have said (1) that it was 'peremptory'. (2) That the 1st and not the 15th was the day for the cheque to be sent. (3) That you thought from it--taken in conjunction with a letter I wrote you and with my not seeing you for 2 weeks (except for the day we met at Dicks) that I wanted to quarrel with you.

You also appear to have remarked obligingly that you did not want to have the fund in your hands, and would be jolly glad when you left England in a few weeks when you could hand it over to Anne.

A little over a month ago, to my surprise as I hadnt asked you (but of course satisfaction, as this is a difficult time for me though not as difficult now as many other during the last 8 months) you wrote saying that the cheque would be sent on the 15th instead of the 1st. You did not say how long this was to continue; but I naturally assumed that it was until I told you that the worst time was over and my book through: or at least that you would not leave a gap of 6 weeks; or that you would warn me.

Therefore today I also, apparently wrongly, assumed that the cheque would arrive.

Secondly, the last time I saw you at your house I said I would prefer to fetch the cheque at Anne's or to have it sent to 44 Holland St.

As it did not arrive, as I thought you might have forgotten or that you might send it to 44 Holland St and I should not be there, I sent you the following telegram:

'Please send money by Wyndham's Squib to 61.'

As you were well aware of all this, I can only regard your statements to Wyndham as deliberately mischievous and unfriendly. There appears, whatever way you turn it, no occasion for this fuss. As I was expecting the money with some anxiety, and as it did not turn up, it was natural to send a telegram: and a telegram is necessarily a curt means of communication, as it is an expensive way of communicating. Again, as you have to come up here to get Anne's signature (or so I have supposed and you have sometimes said) it was natural to assume that you would be near Dicks, and that it would be easy to get him to send it by Squib.

. . . .

Whatever my straits I cannot accept money the dispatch of which evidently depends on ticklish personal relations with some of the donors. At the start I tried very hard, as you know, to get you to put it on a less personal basis: but you had a strong preference for the present character of the scheme. It was impossible for me, since you insisted, and since it would have seemed ungrateful and wrongheaded not to

> accept that arrangement, to do otherwise than agree to that. But the sort of personal difficulties--in this case it seems to me so gratuitous and even meaningless--that you seem disposed to raise for me makes it impossible for me to continue to accept it.
>
> Wyndham is a person who has shown the greatest interest in my work, and has given me the most generous help, of whom I am also fond, and whose work I have in a sense watched over. And whatever your motives, I find it hard to understand even if you had any doubts yourself (as you could not have had I think) about my action in sending you a telegram, why you should risk impairing my friendship with him by making fusses, raising difficulties, and putting me, as you seem to have succeeded in doing, in the position of an ungrateful and quarrelsome person. I can only think that you have made the callous calculation that I am driven to the wall, and that any vagaries must be accepted by me in my present situation.
>
> It is rather you who have driven me where I am, and presumably expect to benefit by this action. For you must know me well enough to understand that I could not accept money from people who will not even pretend to be friendly.
>
> As you and Wyndham account for 12 pounds of the 16 it will not be difficult to wind up the arrangement. I am (only too naturally) sorry that it has to be done, but under the circumstances it would be intolerable to continue receiving it.[5]

Despite Lewis's protestations, Fanny, on 30 April, sent him the May cheque accompanied by a letter stating that she would continue to post his money on a regular basis and, in the event that he refuse to receive it, would leave the accumulated amount in the bank for him until the end of the year. Lewis replied:

> There is no good indulging in humbug: and no letter I could write you under the circumstances would be pleasant reading. I am taking the £13 (the fund has been 'reducing') you sent me this morning because I am so hard up that if the devil himself offered me anything from a half crown upwards I should have to accept it: and having got so far with my writing, I cannot jeopardize this last week or so by being squeamish. . . .

> To be quite plain with you, I don't wish to take it for a moment longer than I can help . . . . You may remember how much I desired some other less personal arrangement. Well, nothing has transpired to alter my feelings or misgivings on that head. But if your idea is a disinterested one to help not a person so much as a thing, art or whatever you like to call it, then there is nothing to prevent you or anybody else interested in doing what could have been done all along: namely buy some of my accumulated stock, or commission me to produce something of a stated sort. . . . As the few people involved all possess and are interested in my work, I should have had the sense from the start to make some such arrangement. . . .
>
> But as regards the fund in its present form I cannot any longer accept it. If you sent it on June 1st and I were still penniless I should I suppose again have to take it. But your natural delicacy will suggest to you that situations of that sort should be avoided.[6]

W. K. Rose, in his editorial notes to Lewis's letters, states that although the events that led to the dissolution of the fund brought an abrupt end to friendly relations between Lewis and the Wadsworths (Fanny especially) the breach between Lewis and Richard Wyndham did not occur until after The Apes of God appeared.[7] This does not seem to have been the case, even though letters written by Lewis related to the administration of the fund illustrate Lewis's desire to maintain--in the spring of 1924--an amicable relationship with Wyndham. The fact that the two men discontinued their social relationship well before The Apes of God appeared is borne out in Lewis's statement in an interview with the Daily Express in September 1930, where he declared that he had not met Richard Wyndham for five years.[8] Furthermore, evidence of the fact that the relationship was under stress prior to 1925 is provided in the Wyndham-Lewis correspondence at Cornell, where Wyndham reveals his impatience with Lewis's then-dominant perception of himself as an outsider and the victim of organized intrigue. Revealing the strain of making continuous but seemingly futile attempts to remain above Lewis's suspicions, he wrote:

> Sometimes, with you, I feel that I am up before some insurmountable wall. To attempt to answer your letter fills me with despair. As I have only one answer the old one--of tell you the truth, and that I know you will not believe. I am sometimes tempted to tell you a string of interesting lies--in keeping with the existence that you continually weave round my life. Unfortunately my imagination is less vivid than yours--so I dare not attempt this. So I will try once more to convince you that I am only what I pretend to be;--a loyal friend to you--and except for you, Wadsworth, and one or two women--actively without friends and often very lonely--I shall try and convince you of this in some way, I have always employed--by giving you a truthful account of what I have done since I last saw you, which is after all only a few days ago. One night I have dined with the Wads alone at their house. Twice I have been out to lunch, once to the Schiffs, once to Lady Colefax (where you were not mentioned). The rest of the time I have dined and lunched alone at Demaria and read Checov.
>
> At the Schiffs--there were the following--a Jew called Oppenheim a foreigner (probably a Jew) called professor--?? who writes on Dostievsky, a simpering girl (a niece I believe of the Schiffs) who played the piano--and myself. The Hinds did not come. Conversation--1. Schiff thanked me for my letter. 2. Schiff remarked that you were not painting at present as you were so busy writing (to one of the Jews)--3. a lot of talk about literature including abuse of a Middleton Murry-- (very severe) otherwise you were not mentioned.[9]

The letter reflects Wyndham's exasperation with his mentor-friend. At the same time its tone and content ironically illustrate the reasonableness of Lewis's failing faith in the motives and attitudes of his leisured friends.

The patchwork friendship between Wyndham and Lewis--already strained by instances of mutual distrust in 1924--suffered more trauma after 1925, when Wyndham acquired very cheaply in New York[10] a number of

Lewis's paintings and subsequently made arrangements to hang them in public exhibitions in London. Lewis, resenting this implied loss of control over the exhibition and/or sale of his own works,[11] wrote to Wyndham to ask him not to go ahead with his plans. Wyndham's reply provides an unambiguous commentary on the deteriorated state of their relationship:

> Your extravagantly, and somewhat absurdly worded, letter had its intended effect; it convinced me that your concern about the exhibition of your pictures was genuine and not as some people suggested a 'Publicity Stunt.'
>
> Such being the case I naturally wired to Lee asking him not to show them and apologized for the inconvenience to which he had been put.
>
> So I think you can put your mind at rest. . . .
>
> I agreed to lend them to the 'London group' because Rupert Lee, who appears to be a great admirer of yours, particularly wished to include them & incidentally told me that you had been consulted.
>
> In other words my poor 'Enemy'--rest assured that I had, and have no intentions of hurting you; for the simple reason that, until you jogged my memory with a telegram, I had entirely forgotten your existence.
>
> Now that you have reminded me of it, and incidentally, divulged your address, may I take this opportunity of reminding you that I hold your receipt for £100, payment for the M.S. of the first book you were to subsequently publish. I would be greatly obliged if you were to send me this now. No doubt the M.S. of the book in question has already been sold at least once. But as I am told you your output has become prolific you can probably find some other M.S. that will suit me as well.[12]

As for Lewis's association with the other contributors to the fund, he, after an altercation with Drey in 1925 (resulting from another misunderstanding related to terms of payment--this time concerning a drawing)[13] seems to have had little or no further sustained contact with any of them. This cutting of ties was concurrent with the general breaking of Lewis's former patterns of group affiliation and public activity. Lewis sought privacy; he went "underground" to work.

b. "The World's Prize Ape," Richard, and Jenny

By the time The Apes of God was published, Marjorie Firminger--who, like her fictional double Val Ritter in Snooty Baronet (1932), had been emotionally seduced by the "crowd that were then called Bright Young People"[14]--had become a "giggling, confused source of chit" for Lewis.[15] Not always to be taken seriously and sometimes, in fact, to be suspected of deliberately misrepresenting or distorting the material about which she wrote, Firminger should not be mistaken for a particularly detached observer. Nevertheless her comments, despite their gossipy nature and tone, should not be dismissed glibly. In her letters and memoir she provides a singular view of at least one facet of the Lewis who cast The Apes of God into the London art world, and of that world itself.

Recalling her first meeting with Lewis, she remarks:

> almost at once he began asking questions about the Bright Young People and their parties . . . I was delighted that the questions were so direct and gossipy. . . .[16]

During her first visit (with Elliott Seabrooke) to Lewis's room at 53 Ossington Street, Bayswater, she noticed that on the chimney piece were "cuttings from newspapers of people behaving absurdly, some of them Bright Young People."[17] Most of the conversation, that evening, had been between Lewis and Seabrooke, she recalls: "about rich men who ought, according to Lewis, to be patrons of the arts, not try to be artists themselves."[18] Dick Wyndham was mentioned specifically, as one who rented expensive studios in Paris and London, and thereby made it "more difficult than ever for the genuine artist to find somewhere cheap to work in."[19] This and others of his habits and attitudes were caricatured in the behaviour of Dick Whittingdon in The Apes of God:

> Here was an Ape indeed! reflected Dan. . . . He rented all the studios, there must be quite ten studios--in this way the 'world's Ape,' it could easily be computed, must prevent ten geniuses from having a roof over their genius, and must keep them in small ill-lit rooms while he sat on all these valuable workshops in solitary egotistic state-- (Apes, 189/199)

In her memoir, Firminger recalls her own astonishment at her recognition of Richard Wyndham in the novel:

> surely the Dick was founded on Dick Wyndham, considering he arrived, as Dick usually did, in a huge snorting car, was tall, rather 'boyish,' very concerned about his physical fitness and had taken to painting himself. But the nerve of calling his character by the same Christian name![20]

Her written response to Lewis was that she was "delighted with Dick. I have never laughed so much over anything as the description of him ending in 'I feel terribly fit!'"[21]

Richard Wyndham was not the only victim in The Apes of God who was referred to directly in the Firminger letters. Supposing Lewis to be interested in the reactions to the wounds he inflicted, Firminger was always quick to convey to him what she referred to over and over again in her letters as "juicy news"[22] or "a good bit of chit."[23] Representing a sort of balance between insider and outsider among the socialites of London, she was in a social position which was almost ideal for her role as gossip. Certainly her temperament appeared to be such that, once she began to write, she was inevitably carried away by the spirit of innuendo. So she proceeded to inform Lewis, whenever possible, about how the victims of his satire (among them, Edward and Fanny Wadsworth) were responding to his attack:

> [Edward (not Wadsworth)] said the description of Fanny was perfect. He met a woman friend of Fanny's who told him that when she last saw the Wadsworths, he (W) was going over to Tiekerage (Dick's place) to read the book. . . . Fanny apparently said that she'd heard you were very rude to her in it & wanted much to know what you'd written. She thought it most unkind of you considering how intimate you had once been with them both. . . . But they've decided, apparently, however bad it is--to take it smiling (like men!). So Edward says.[24]

Edward Wadsworth and his wife, Fanny, appear in The Apes of God as the toadies who visit Dick Whittingdon's studio in the chapter entitled "Ape-Flagellant." Wadsworth, who had inherited "a considerable fortune"[25] in 1921 and, who, after his Vorticist phase, had developed a fondness for painting marine landscapes, was easily recognizable as the "rich mountebank marine-painter" who lived in a style made possible by his "class-war-profiteered factory-wealth but lately-inherited" (Apes, 180/190). His wife, Fanny, was rightfully upset if she recognized herself as Jenny:

> Obese and smiling, with a face massaged to a floury pallor, the small woman continued to roll beside her sporting mate, with a jaunty assurance, cigarette-holder aloft in a pudgy stump of a fist. (Apes, 179/189-90)

Richard Wyndham and the Wadsworths were part of the social clique which included, in the 1920s, the Schiffs and the Sitwells, but whereas the latter figures in this group were forewarned of Lewis's satirical treatment of them in The Apes of God (by virtue, that is, of "The Apes of God" fragment in The Criterion in 1924), Wyndham and his closest friends, the "Wads" as he called them, were apparently taken by surprise when they encountered themselves as characters in fiction in 1930.

Wyndham, as Dick Whittingdon, Lady Fredigonde's boyish (and flatulent) nephew, recognized himself as the "Ape of God proper" (*Apes*, 122/130), "'the World's Ape'" (*Apes*, 178/188), creator of the "*masterpiece of Apish art*" (*Apes*, 183/194) which is the subject of the dispute that dominates Part 6 of the novel. The argument, which provides a forum for the author to expose the meagre and naive talents of "the great studio-lord in the painter's smock" (*Apes*, 185/196), is precipitated by Jenny (Fanny Wadsworth), the preposterous and boring "fat half-blind ex-cook" (*Apes*, 180/190) wife of the "millionaire marine-painter" (*Apes*, 180/191) who presumes to air her views about the rich tyro's art:

> 'You see--the red house spoils it. You must admit Dick that the red house spoils it.'
>
> 'I don't admit anything of the sort!'
>
> 'I maintain it could not be that red!'
>
> 'How do you mean Jenny--"*could* not be" that red! What does it matter whether it *could* be or not!' Dick peevishly pumps out his argument, in spasms of rich-toned complaint.
>
> 'No Dick you can't have I maintain in a realistic picture--.'
>
> 'But it isn't realistic!'
>
> '*Yes it is*!'
>
> 'Really Jenny I don't think you.'
>
> 'No Dick. I still maintain it's the wrong red, I'm sorry!'
>
> 'Jenny is *maintaining* again Richard!'
>
> 'Oh I know!' brother Richard laughed helplessly to brother Dick.
>
> The kindergarten was all alive with the dispute over the big boy's oil-picture, with the Noah's Ark H for House that they all knew he had squeezed out of the tube of vermilion, when left to himself, just to be clever and steal a march, but only the little old girl dared to speak up, and it was a ticklish moment. (*Apes* 183/193-94)

The dispute is to some degree a comment on the "rugged spirit of the small midland yeoman" (*Apes*, 181/191) that Jenny is: the "contentious bully of the rustic pub" (*Apes*, 181/191) comes to life to match herself against Dick. More significantly, though, it is a commentary on the artistic talents of the conceited and overbearing "army-and-county amateur" (Apes, 181/192) modelled on Wyndham.

Lewis's satire of Richard Wyndham here is focused and specific, for the argument about the house is strongly reminiscent of the young dilettante's own description of his artistic development in the early 1920s. In a letter to Lewis written from Amalfi, Italy, where Wyndham vacationed in the company of the Sitwells (presumably before the 1924 disruption of the Lewis-Wyndham friendship) he wrote:

> I have done three more of those ink drawings and I think they are pretty good--better perhaps than the last set. I am using a little stronger colour in places which makes them more interesting--such as in flags, or an earthen wear pot--or a piece of mosaic ornament. I am still only just tinting the buildings--but adding these few stronger notes of colour here and there on the page.[26]

* * *

Dick Whittingdon is featured initially in The Apes of God in the chapter entitled simply "Dick" (Part 1 of the novel). It is in Part 6 ("Ape-Flagellant") that he is joined by his toadies, Richard and Jenny (the Wadsworths), whose sycophantic behaviour toward "this rich coveted amateur, so haughtily 'county' (just the thing for their imperfect brand-new social-life)" (Apes, 180/190) is treated satirically. Edward Wadsworth, who had been Lewis's associate not only at the Omega Workshops and the London Group in 1913, but also at the Rebel Art Centre in 1914, the Vorticist Exhibition at the Doré Gallery in 1915, and the X Group in 1919; and who contributed to Lewis's Blast and The Tyro, came under attack in Lewis's novel not for being an ape himself, but for allowing his sudden acquisition of wealth in the 1920s, and the attractiveness of the new possibilities of social advancement it promised, to shape his fawning response to the paintings of the socially prominent but artistically amateur Richard Wyndham.

> 'Jenny is right Dick!' Richard exclaimed in alarm, all of a sudden. . . .
>
> 'Oh I'm glad you think so Richard! I'm afraid I don't!' Dick gave Richard a very hard bright little rap with his eye indeed--that's for you my fine fellow! Darting his trunk round to the fireplace he swooped and struck it low down with the muzzle of his underslung pipe. . . .
>
> Consternation entered into Jenny and Richard. As one person they started to move after the offended figure, Dicking hard as they went, in plaintive chirping.
>
> 'Dick! I see what you meant Dick about the tree on the left!' cried Brother Richard.
>
> 'Oh really!' muttered Dick as he drew away.
>
> 'Dick! you're not offended are you! Dick! I'm not sure after all!' (Apes, 185/195)

The "dicking" and "chirping" of Richard and Jenny is parodied throughout the chapter in the intermittent grotesque pantomimes involving Bloggie, the midget Polish lesbian and her two "sucking doves" who, with "their fat flesh-yellow legs hanging down like four ripe plantains" (Apes, 179/189), occupy the model's throne. Richard and Jenny are implicitly likened to these two odalisks, "heavy and coy dependent-creatures" who "took their cue from their dumb goddess" (Apes, 188/189).

c. Master Dick and Archie

The class-consciousness of Richard and Jenny, intensely aware of their possibilities (by virtue of their newly-acquired riches) for social advancement ("for oh, is not so much unexpected money so unreal and uncanny, when not possessed from the cradle up?") (Apes, 180/190) is in keeping with the dominant motif of "Ape-Flagellant." The chapter begins with the class-hierarchy apparently intact, sustained by the servant's token "foot-scrape upon the mat" before the luxury-shop-girl and the "polite derision" of Cubbs, the gentleman's gentleman, for the cockney carpenter who delivers to him the seven gilt picture frames that are destined for the apery. But the manifest servility is self-conscious ("The servant stopped. Serving-men do not go straight in without a decent irresolution, it was a luxury-shop: so he drew up, he hesitated, he went in" [Apes, 177/187]) and as tentative as the seigneur's token power, symbolized by the relegation of the ape-flagellant's whips--symbols of domination, mastery, and superiority--to objets d'art:

> 'Oh Dick you've got a new one haven't you! What a beauty! I'm sure I've never seen that before! What is it?'
>
> 'It is the thong of a Bokharan cow-herd,' said Dick impressively, very big-boy-at-school. 'It is made of goat-gut.'
>
> 'Oh I think that's sweet Dick, don't you Richard?' she gruffly trilled, and Richard came in far down in the bass in assent. (Apes, 190/200)

Dick Whittingdon's role in The Apes of God is not restricted to that of the "artisan among artisans," but is integrally related to the novel's political structure. He is the most oppressively snobbish character in the book, one whose condescension and "seigneurial restraint" (Apes, 45/51; 182/193) is matched only by his political naiveté. It is he who introduces Archie Margolin to the Follett household, only to be circumvented, finally, by Zagreus, under whose patronage Archie advances, at the novel's end, "in the mighty victorian looking-glasses" (Apes, 625/650). Master Dick is the "happy dupe" and "foolface" (Apes, 46/52; 47/54) to proletarian Archie; he is a "strutting Goliath" doomed to fall before this child-sized David.

d. "An 'Agony' Surprise . . ."

The fictional portrait of Richard Wyndham, the ape-flagellant,[27] would have been immediately recognizable to those contemporaries who knew him. He is exposed first of all through his caricatured associates: not only the Wadsworths but also his man-servant Squib ("Cubbs" in the novel) and his friend Olga "Oggie" Lynn, "grossly travestied "[28] as "Bloggie," the Polish "lesbian midget squatted aloft upon the model's throne" (Apes, 184/194) in Whittingdon's studio. Wyndham, finding himself the object of Lewis's comical derision, responded with the only retributory weapon at hand. Recalling Lewis's extravagant plea in the mid 1920s, that Wyndham not exhibit publicly the Lewis paintings he had acquired in New York in 1925, he placed a three-line advertisement in the "agony" column of The Times, offering two of Lewis's paintings for sale at unrealistically low prices. He did this in spite of the fact that several years earlier he had written to Lewis:

> As regards the future;-- I can obviously give no guarantee that I will not exhibit your works, as, in the event of my wishing to sell them; a public exhibition might be the best method. But apart from such a contingency, I can assure you that I do not intend using your early paintings as a weapon, for reprisals; nor as subjects for childish 'Tittle-tattle' in one of the many magazines published for this purpose.[29]

The last laugh in this series of rather grim practical jokes was Lewis's. His Arthur Press reprinted and distributed as a broadsheet the following interview, entitled "An 'Agony' Surprise for Chelsea. One Artist and Another Artist's Paintings. 'For Sale,'" from the 4 September 1930 Daily Express:

> The studios of Chelsea and Kensington are all agog over a three-line advertisement which has been appearing in the 'agony' column of a London newspaper. It is as follows:--
>
> 'Percy Wyndham Lewis.--Two paintings for sale, 9 ft. by 7 ft., and 6 ft. by 4 ft. £20 and £15: inspection.--Captain Wyndham, Bedford Gardens.'
>
> The detailed specification of size, contrasted with the price, invites one to work out a simple little sum to show that you can buy a square foot of Wyndham Lewis painting for a trifling expenditure of 6s. 8d. or 7s.
>
> A Daily Express representative called at Bedford Gardens to have a look at the bargains, but was met with the explanation that the pictures can be seen only after arrangement with Captain Wyndham, whose present address is unknown, because he is travelling in France.
>
> Mr. Percy Wyndham Lewis, the painter, cubist, impressionist, tyroist, vorticist--he does not care much for any of these descriptions--rocked with laughter when the Daily Express representative called at his studio for more light.
>
> 'Have you seen this?' he asked, and stopped under the weight as he handed me a portentous volume, Apes of God, his recent satirical novel, priced at three guineas.
>
> A SATIRE.
>
> 'This,' said he, 'is a satire, as nearly as it can be described. Now a satire is a presentation of very stupid and foolish people, and I have been astonished at the number of people who have taken various figures in this book as representing themselves. You would not believe the amount of abuse I have received by telephone and letter.
>
> 'I have been amazed at the people who have suddenly said as they looked at Apes of God, "That's me! that's me!"
>
> 'I don't think there is anything in the book in the least resembling Captain Richard Wyndham. Is it possible that he has chosen a figure in the book as being himself? If so, it is all imagination on his part.
>
> 'I met Captain Wyndham eight years ago when he was leaving the Army and beginning to be an artist. I sort of helped him a little bit--taught him to draw a

> chimney pot, you know--in Venice. Then we have not met for five years. He seems to be cross with me. Some time ago when I was dining with Augustus John, I saw him in the restaurant, but he did not seem friendly.'

As editor of the broadsheet, Lewis added:

> Since a number of these advertisements, it appears, have been inserted in the Agony Column, and so already a respectable sum of money must have been expended, up-to-date: since the owner of the pictures (like all 'patrons of the arts' himself a 'painter') is a rich man: since further, the most usual and satisfactory means of disposing of a work of art is to put it into a sale-room--it is evident that the object of this advertisement has been to injure the reputation of Mr. Wyndham Lewis. There is no need to point out the futility of this proceeding: but it does supply another glaring example (if such were needed) of the infantilism, or chronic 'childishness,' from which many of the Lido-loving, Antibes-splashing, Old Public School Boys and their girls, suffer! Also it throws a strange light upon the tender sympathy experienced by the monied artist for his 'professional' colleague.--Well well well![30]

In Blasting & Bombardiering Wyndham Lewis recalled his initial meeting of Dick Wyndham, in Venice, in 1922 and their subsequent relationship:

> I taught him how to sketch Venetian palaces--the fingers of one hand grasping the pencil and the fingers of the other grasping the nose, as all the best palaces are washed by cesspools.[31]

With effectively delicate double entendre, he continued:

> From this little seed has flowered the Richard Wyndham of to-day, whose pictorial achievements require no introduction from me.[32]

13. RATNER

a. A Case of Mistaken Identity

When Osbert Sitwell travelled to New York in 1925 he found remarkable the response of American readers to the English roman à clef. He recorded in an essay his impressions of the novel-reading Americans and what struck him as their peculiar manner of explicating the gossip-column fiction of a culture that was not their own:

> English novels--romans à clef--were in the United States fitted out with an entirely different and local personnel. If, for example, Desmond MacCarthy had been said to figure in an English book, in America this same character would be identified with Heywood Broun, and the figure of a woman writer of the time, say Rose Macaulay, would be replaced by that of Ruth Hale, and similarly, on through the whole volume. In short, there were two sets of characters, but if you explained that one of them was not an American but an Englishman, your statement would be received with incredulity.[1]

Sitwell's observation draws attention to the variousness and, by implication, the precariousness--from the point of view of literary criticism--of the practice of the reader's identification of character-originals in a supposed livre à clef. What Sitwell observed in America was not peculiar to the reception of a roman à clef outside of its native context, however. Controversy, contradiction, and error in the matter of character-identification occurred frequently within the very literary world from which the kinds of works Sitwell alluded to had erupted. When T. S. Eliot, for example, produced a key to the cast of characters in Huxley's Crome Yellow on the dust-wrapper of his own copy of the novel, and identified Priscilla Wimbush as Lady Ida Sitwell, his opinion--while consistent with that of the Sitwell family--was not in accordance with the conviction of those of his contemporaries who identified the original of Mrs. Wimbush as Ottoline Morrell. Similarly, when Gerald Reitlinger, in his own list of originals recorded in his copy of The Apes of God, identified Matthew Plunkett as David Garnett, his opinion was contradictory to Michael Holroyd's later (and more reasonable) view that Plunkett's original was Lytton Strachey (and Betty Bligh, of course, Strachey's devoted female companion, Dora Carrington).

In the case of the roman à clef, frequently the author's attempts to distort biographical idiosyncracies in order to avoid possible charges of libel, or his propensity to create--consciously or not--characters who were drawn from several models simultaneously, tended to lead the reader astray, or at least to diffuse the possible metaphorical extensions of characterization. Moreover, the limited nature of any reader's knowledge and experience, combined with his eagerness to exploit the gossip-value of any new fiction narrative, frequently resulted in hasty and superficial judgements about who was the original of whom.

The greatest peril arising from the mis-identification of character-originals--again, from the point of view of literary criticism--is the situation that results when erroneous judgements in identity become the foundation of critical assessments that are at best awkward and at worst misdirected and irresponsible. Consider, for example, as a case in point, Geoffrey Wagner's strained and erroneous identification of Jimmiejulius Ratner as James Joyce in his discussion of The Apes of God in Wyndham Lewis: A Portrait of the Artist as the Enemy. Wagner's reasons for seeing Joyce in Ratner are to some degree understandable. But he bases his argument on a very few selected details, seemingly arbitrarily chosen without reference to the countless others that would tend to contradict his assessment.[2]

Wagner lists a series of tenuous--indeed, greatly strained--connections between Ratner and Joyce and then goes on to speak of some unknown "oral connection, or unpreserved letters" that would account for Lewis's allusion to Ratner's "epiphanic" prose[3] and his Joycean method of writing. All the while he ignores the wealth of biographical description--comprised of details that have no precedent in the life and character of Joyce--that forms the very core of Ratner's characterization. Moreover, an examination of the final manuscript transcripts of The Apes of God reveals that the two short sentences that form the clencher of Wagner's thesis: "It was there. Epiphany," (Apes, 156/166) were added in the final typescript of the novel and the word "Epiphany" itself was underlined (italicized) at the proof stage. That is around March 1930.[4] The "split-man" himself, of course, pre-dated these textual emendations by six years.

Wagner's mis-identification of Ratner with Joyce has not gone unnoticed. An anonymous reviewer of Wagner's book, writing the lead column for the 2 August 1957 Times Literary Supplement states that Wagner's discussion of Ratner as Joyce,[5] which badly distorts the Lewis-Joyce relationship, "accounts for several pages of the most utter rubbish"[6] in the book. Wagner responded to this criticism in a letter to the editor, published 30 August 1957:

> I am perfectly aware--as my book hints--of living originals for characters like Ratner and Zagreus in The Apes of God, but also try to demonstrate that Lewis used the former to satirize Joyce as well.[7]

Following this statement, Wagner makes reference, in his letter, to the "Defamation Act" of 1952, citing it as the reason for his failure to state the identity of the real model for Ratner. Furthermore, he raises the issue of the paralytic effects of the "Act" on literary scholarship. Evidently Wagner was unaware of the fact that in 1957 Ratner's model was no longer among the living: the real-life Ratner had died in 1955.

Robert Chapman, in his more recent study entitled Wyndham Lewis, is more cautious than Wagner when he states that "there are many similarities between James Joyce and Jimjulius Ratner, the second-rate writer with the 'epiphany' style. . . ."[8] He makes no attempt to justify his equation. (Chapman, incidentally, demonstrates his own lack of attention to detail when, on the same page, he quotes an early review of The Apes of God written by Richard Aldington and attributes the words to Montague Slater.) Most recently, Jeffrey Meyers, in his biography of Lewis, accepts without question the Ratner/Joyce identification and, as a tribute to Joyce's conciliatory nature, remarks that a month after The Apes of God appeared, Lewis and Joyce "dined together at Joyce's request and had a friendly discussion. . . ."[9]

The weakness of Wagner as critic and Meyers as biographer in this instance is not their collective failure to identify the real-life model for Julius Ratner. Rather, their critical shortcoming consists of their faulty extrapolation upon a very few details of language obtained from arbitrarily selective attention to the text. Furthermore, by straining their mistaken judgement they tend to obscure the characteristically precise pattern of Lewis's literary portraiture. A strikingly large number of the real-life originals of the characters who populate the pages of The Apes of God were the subjects also of Lewis's graphic portraiture in the early years of the decade.[10] When Lewis deliberately created literary portraits--so often, as mentioned, of these same individuals--he generally expressed himself in writing as he had done with the tools of the graphic artist: in terms of the identifiable likeness. As a result, his literary caricatures tend to reveal singular attention to and faithful rendering of the idiosyncracies of character, appearance, and life-role of a given character-model. Minor deviations from the original, made to ensure legal impunity or for the sake of narrative expediency, do not even begin to distort the likeness beyond recognition. Where (presently) a model can be recognized from the world of characters Lewis was portraying, most of the significant biographical detail defining the literary character drawn from that model has a discernible parallel in the life of its paradigm.

In the 1920s Lewis was more bold in establishing the clues that would allow the reading public to recognize his character-models than he would have been had The Apes of God been composed after the libel suits he sustained during the next decade. The later drafts of The Apes of God reveal that in that particular work of satire, he was attempting to walk a fine line, to strike a balance between overt invitation to libel action and ensurance of the public recognition of his satiric victims. He was willing, in 1924, to admit that the name Stillwell was "too suggestive of certain people"[11] and, on the advice of T. S. Eliot, to change it. The name became Finnian Shaw, but its evolution reveals Lewis's attempt to retain some traceable connection between character and model.

Finnian Shaw, until the final typescript of the novel, had been Inish Shaw (evocative of Renishaw, the Sitwell family estate). The final modification to Finnian Shaw is still suggestive, but perhaps not so incriminating. The manuscript drafts of the novel reveal various similar last-minute revisions. For example, until the page proofs, Richard Wyndham's last name had been not the final Whittingdon, but the more nearly suggestive Wadenham. Most interesting of all, Lewis deleted from the latter stages of the novel the oblique but undisguised identification of the model for Horace Zagreus. Scratched from the proof is the following revelatory statement made by Lady Fredigonde:

> 'What's in a name?--Just the opposite of what *he* says!'
> 'What ever the cause, he has a great down on *words*--how I agree with him there though by Jupiter! When you come to think! Bolts from the blue they flop down on men and women from nowhere, in their cradles, on each anonymous noddle--all of us worse luck have to be a something! a Gertrude, a Guy Fawkes--a Horace Zagreus--a Horace Cole!' [12]

Wyndham Lewis was not, as Geoffrey Wagner's analysis of Ratner implies, merely obliquely suggestive in his portrayal of individuals in fiction. He tended to execute his literary caricatures, like his graphic portraits, with sharp and precise bounding lines. Rupert Grayson, publisher of the first trade edition of *The Apes of God* (1931) and one of Lewis's later victims--one of those who took legal action against his portraitist--sums up neatly in his autobiography the effect of being drawn by the literary hand of Lewis:

> A few years later I too was awarded the ink-black badge of his friendship. He employed his usual weapon, a pen sharpened to dagger point with which he etched my likeness in *Snooty Baronet*, cutting lines jagged and deeper than scars and poisoned with acidic

> brilliance; it was no joke unless you enjoy being ridiculed. As a friend of mine remarked when asked what he thought of Lewis: 'Very funny if it isn't you.'[13]

b. The Split-man

Julius Ratner is among the first apes Dan Boleyn is sent out to meet. Zagreus, in his letter of introduction to Dan, states that Ratner is: "my favourite paradigm for a certain class of rather obscure Apes. Pierpoint used him as an illustration, when I had my course, and it was through him I met Ratner" (Apes, 137/147). There is some evidence that in the earlier drafts of the novel Zagreus feels compelled to explain further to Dan why he has chosen to introduce him to an ape who is left over, as it were, from Zagreus's own course in apery and apedom under the direction of Pierpoint. In a short passage which Lewis later deleted from the typescript of the novel, Zagreus remarks further: "He wears well as a cheap illustration: certain allowances have to be made, but he is never out-of-date, because so fundamental."[14] Ratner is the split-man, a man-in-profile, a representation, on one level at least, of the unaccommodated intellect or the isolated eye railed against in Time and Western Man as both cause and symptom of the fragmentation of modern personality and experience.[15]

Lewis's model for this man with a disembodied "self-torturing" (Apes, 165/176) mind was John Rodker,[16] remembered by his close friend, Nancy Cunard, as "one of the most self-critical people I have ever met." He was, she recalled, "so introspective, sometimes brooding and self-critical to the point of self-torture."[17] Seemingly recognizing some of those elements within Rodker that would have contributed to Lewis's perception of him as "split," she remarks on the "thoughtful, analytical disposition" which gave rise to "those sudden, wild contradictions within him, as if an argument had been going on all too long in there, until the owner of both threw up his hands, so to speak, with 'a plague on both your houses.'"[18]

Lewis's acquaintance with Rodker went at least as far back as 1916-17 when both of them--along with Pound, H. D., Eliot, Harriet Shaw Weaver, Arthur Waley, Mary Butts, Iris Barry, Ford Madox Hueffer, and others--attempted to meet regularly for Monday suppers at a restaurant in Soho. It is quite likely that Lewis knew Rodker even before this period, however, for both men moved in the pre-war world of Imagism, T. E. Hulme, and Ezra Pound. Moreover, the modernistic illustration on the cover of Rodker's private edition of his own Poems (published in 1914: "To be had of the author, 1 Osborne Street, Whitechapel") was designed by David Bomberg with whose work Lewis had been familiar at least since 1913.

A brief catalogue of Rodker's activities from after the war until 1930 reveals that intersections between Rodker's associations and activities and Lewis's occurred frequently during this time. Moreover, many of these junctures in the career of the two men became the raw material for the satirist's pen in the Ratner-episodes of The Apes of God.

Rodker's work was published regularly in Harriet Shaw Weaver's The Egoist (1914-19), the little magazine that serialized Joyce's Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1914-15) and Lewis's Tarr (1916-17). In 1919 Rodker founded the Ovid Press, which published what

Nancy Cunard called "sumptuous editions"[19] of contemporary work. The initials and colophon of Ovid Press books were especially designed by Edward Wadsworth. The eight titles issued by the press included deluxe limited editions of the work of Lewis and those with whom he was associated: *Twenty Drawings From the Note-books of H. Gaudier-Brzeska* and Pound's *The Fourth Canto* in 1919; Eliot's *Ara Vos Prec* in 1919, Rodker's own *Hymns*, Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, Wadsworth's *The Black Country*, and Lewis's *Fifteen Drawings* in 1920.[20]

In the early twenties, Rodker's work appeared regularly in *The Little Review* (1914-29)--a magazine for which he acted as foreign editor for a time.[21] He published also in *Poetry* (1912+) and in such less prominent little magazines as *Others* (1915-19), *The Apple* (1920-22), *Contact* (1920-23), and *Broom* (1921-24). Lewis's own *Tyro* (published by The Egoist Press) included a prose piece by Rodker entitled "Mr. Segando in the Fifth Cataclysm" in No. 1 (1921) and two poems by him in No. 2 (1922). *Tyro* No. 2 also carried two prominently-placed ads (1/4 page each, on the first page) for Rodker's current private publications. One of these was his translation from the French of the Comte de Lautréamont's *The Lay of Maldoror* (a work which Lewis identified--along with that of Oscar Wilde and Beardsley, Huysmans, Nietzsche, Baudelaire, Byron, and Rimbaud--as the basis of an orthodoxy of nihilistic romanticism that exults in passionate diabolism and preaches violent hatred, misanthropy, and universal revolt).[22] Rodker's edition of the poem was to be issued, according to the *Tyro* ad, in one thousand numbered copies, one hundred of which were to be printed on large hand-made sheets of paper and be specially bound. The poem was printed by the translator on his own press in 1924.[23] Also advertised in Tyro No. 2 was Rodker's new edition of the Memoirs of Giacomo Casanova, published in twelve volumes (in 1922) by his new printing house, The Casanova Society. It was undoubtedly this publishing venture that gave rise to the following passage in The Apes of God:

> He saw into his small shop in Soho in spirit--there he distinctly perceived a man in a new dark overcoat. . . . This thick-fingered gull (big feminine-jowled, soft and shaven) was bending over a large white volume. He had seen him before (he could not get his name out of him)--the fellow was weighing its pornographic promise against his big cheque in his pocket. The large hearty fool frowned, for the promised manure did not docilely present itself, as he turned the pages, affecting to be highbrow.
>
> Ratner (as he had done the day before) hesitates. Then with a rattling sneer, meant to be soft (but coming out so harsh the startled fool looked up at him) he bends forward and says to him, looking down at the book:
>
> 'I was reading it again yesterday. It is an astonishing piece of writing. But I confess I was horrified--I wondered how I could ever have come to publish it! The part where the--Where is it?' and he guides the customer with a sleuth-like index to the satisfying spots one by one.--The cheque changes hands. (Apes, 152/162)

In the early 1920s Rodker appeared to be influentially associated with the Egoist Press. His apparent connection with the press was reinforced by his involvement in 1922 with the publication of the first English edition of Joyce's Ulysses, which bears the imprint: "Published for the Egoist Press, London by John Rodker, Paris 1922." The second edition (1923) also was published by "John Rodker for the Egoist Press."[24] In 1926 Rodker's The Future of Futurism, a book of criticism that quotes Lewis as an authority in a few instances, was published. In October 1927, transition 7 published excerpts from Rodker's translation of Lautréamont's The Lay of Maldoror; the work was cited by transition's Eugene Jolas, in his affirmation of the "diabolical principle."[25] In September 1928 Rodker published Pound's A Draft of The Cantos 17-24, a volume with initials designed by Gladys Hynes (whose name appears on Gerald Reitlinger's key to The Apes of God opposite that of Dan Boleyn's aggressive protectress, Mélanie Blackwell). Beginning in 1927 and continuing in 1928 Pound serialized Rodker's novel, Adolphe 1920 in his periodical, The Exile (1927-28).[26] In October 1929 Rodker's novel was released by The Aquila Press, managed by Winifred Henderson,[27] who had been an assistant to Rodker at the Ovid and who later went on to become the manager of Nancy Cunard's Hours Press, from 1930 until the press closed in 1931. Winifred Henderson, according to Gerald Reitlinger's key, modeled for Paula Kennedy, "a peroxide fellow-publisher in a small way, just gone into business" (Apes, 543/566). Mrs. Kennedy figures as Ratner's friend in "Now Jonathan Bell was an Old John Bull."[28]

In 1930 the Hours Press published Rodker's Collected Poems 1912-1925. Again, Rodker was personally involved with the publication of his own work, a practice that had already given rise to Lewis's description of Ratner as "self-appointed, self-advertised, self-published, self-loved, [and] almost self-made":

> For now it was quite beyond question at all that since Mr. Julius Ratner kept a highbrow bookshop, a certain Mr. R. was able to sell his friend Joo's books--and because as well Jimjulius was a publisher, Joo was luckily in a position to publish his particular pal Ratner's novels and his poems--and on account of the fortunate fact that J. Ratner & Co. were the Publishers and distributors of a small high-brow review called simply Man X it was possible for Juliusjimmie to puff and fan that wan perishable flame of the occasional works of his old friend Jimjulius. It was a concatenation of circumstances such as every author whatever must sigh for. J. Ratner & Co. made its money on the limited-edition-ramp by printing in white-

> calf of the Eighteenth Century literature of gallantry, in translations from the italian and the french: so the hearty exploits of some legendary squarepusher of the golden days of Europe, pre-Marx and pre-Bonaparte, among other things became gold that was from time to time judiciously laid out to appease Mr. J. R.'s personal vanity. The literary book-merchant who had given his name to Ratner Ltd. could help his blood-brother Julius. Such was the involved interplay of business and the mildest of literary power-complexes indulged invariably in a gentlemanly manner. (Apes, 150-51/160-61)

c. The Ape-devil

Among those who have identified in writing Julius Ratner's original as John Rodker, are Professor J. Isaacs (who wrote the obituary tribute to Rodker in the Times), Gerald Reitlinger (Lewis's contemporary who identified Ratner in his personal key to The Apes of God) and Richard Aldington (who knew Rodker in the early years, reviewed his volumes of poetry in 1914 and 1920, and in 1951 stated in a letter that "[t]he Rodker-Ratner piece [in The Apes of God] is too savage").[29] There is (aside from the obvious career-oriented relationships between Rodker and Ratner cited in the passages above) a plethora of descriptive detail in the text of The Apes of God that reinforces this connection. Many of the simple biographical particulars of Ratner's life, for example, parallel those of his paradigm. Ratner's wife, the "big carrotty anglish intelligentsia" who "marched off to Rome with a lover" (Apes, 137/147) is drawn from Rodker's wife, Mary Butts, remembered by Iris Barry as a girl with "vermilion-red hair."[30] Sylvia Beach recalled her as "a personality in the Paris of the twenties with her red hair" whose work (specifically her novel, Ashe of Rings, 1925), was "so promising."[31] Indeed, Mary Butts' significance as a literary figure in the 1920s was acknowledged by her being one of the "foremost men in the arts" asked to respond to a questionnaire for the final number of The Little Review (May 1929). In a holograph note in the typescript of The Apes of God--a note later deleted from the text--Lewis alludes to her literary aspirations when he refers to Ratner's estranged wife as "a Bloomsbury highbrow."[32] Ratner's commitment to Freud ("he emerged from the East End, with Freud for his Talmud") (Apes, 137/147) and his obsession with his various "complexes" (See Apes, 137/147-148; 166-67/176-78; passim.) is based on Rodker's fascination with psychoanalysis. This interest found concrete expression in the 1940s and 1950s when his Imago Press published Freud's complete works.

Other biographical details that would have further consolidated Ratner's association with Rodker appeared for a time in the typescript of the novel, but Lewis eventually withdrew them. One of these was related to Rodker's having spent time in prison as a conscientious objector during the First World War. The statement that appears on page 147 of the novel simply as "During the War he went away" had been altered from the earlier: "During the War he vanished. What is most to his credit is his refusal to participate."[33] On the same page of the text, the statement: "he made money in the book business" had been derived from the more explicit: "He started a bookshop he published. . . . He printed his free verse at his own expense and was a young poet."[34]

While Lewis made some changes in the novel's manuscript that effectively diluted the volume of biographical material that related Ratner to Rodker, he made at least one significant change in the other direction. In one of the typescript versions of "The Encyclical" Lewis substituted the name Ratner for "Krang" (the name by which the split-man was called in the 1924 version of "Mr. Zagreus and the Split-Man"). The word "Krang" is derived from the Dutch "kreng," which refers to a carcass, or, more specifically, to the body of a whale stripped of its blubber. This early name served Lewis by conveying the intended physical repulsiveness of this man with "a yellow-suet face" (Apes, 167/178) whom Geoffrey Wagner--recalling the description of Ratner in the novel as a "'bilious greasepot'"--called "perhaps the most unpleasant character Lewis has ever depicted."[35] Perhaps Lewis later chose "Ratner" because the name evoked "Rodker" and at the same time expressed--in the image of a rat--the concept of a more active loathsomeness.

* * *

Not only the name, but also the very character and role of Ratner in The Apes of God were altered significantly during the period of time in which Lewis composed the novel. Ratner's first appearance within the time-frame of the novel's composition is as a kind of insolent, but willingly restrained demon of Zagreus. At this point he is little more than a part of the talismanic inventory of his master's emblematic personal environment. In the part of the novel already composed, for the most part, by 1924, Zagreus tells Ratner: "'You are my Jinn, my dear Julius,'" alluding to the supernatural beings of Moslem legend--minor demons or genii--who are able to take the form of humans or animals (most notably snakes) and influence human affairs. (According to legend, the powers of the jinn could be exploited by human beings fortunate enough to know the proper magical procedure by which to enslave them.) "'You are in my power'" Zagreus the magician continues: "'I elect you to be my servant: as you say--for to-night'" (Apes, 332/348).

Consistent with the concept of the jinni--a concept proportionately more significant in the original Ratner episodes--are the many allusions to Ratner as serpent and demon, references that enhance and fortify, as we shall see, Lewis's composite image of this character as a paradigmatic type of "ape." Zagreus variously calls him "the devil of my Morality" (Apes, 448/467), "a tame devil" (Apes, 610/635), "a minor Satan" (Apes, 611/636). Dan sees him as an "insinuating devil" (Apes, 170/181), an "unbelieving devil" (Apes, 171/182), and a "devil in human form" (Apes, 171/182). While unequivocally identified as demon, Ratner is introduced to Dan as a "cheap" but "fundamental"[36] illustration of a simian species. By relating Ratner simultaneously to devil and ape, Lewis evoked what Horst W. Janson, in his study entitled Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance (1952) refers to as the "ape-devil theory" which developed among the early fathers of the Christian church. In his enlightening discussion of the figure of the devil as ape, Janson relates that:

> According to patristic literature, one of the most important qualities of the devil is his unceasing ambition to imitate the Lord. Incapable of any creative act of his own, he nevertheless wishes to be acknowledged by his devotees as the true Creator, and for this reason compels them to honor him by a ritual copied from that of the true Church. Since the epithet 'ape' had been used to designate spurious pretenders and unworthy imitators by both classical and early Christian writers, the devil, as the unworthy imitator par excellence, eventually came to be known as simia Dei.[37]

That Lewis in fact drew his image of the ape from this patristic tradition is indicated in the closing paragraph of the blurb found in the inside front dustjacket flap of the Arthur Press edition of The Apes of God. Here he wrote:

> The origin of the title is in the belief of the early christians that the world swarmed with small devils who impersonated the Deity. These imitators of God they called Apes of God.

Ratner, as Lewis first conceived him, was to represent the archetypal ape-devil. But since Lewis moved beyond the highly emblematic character roles of "Mr. Zagreus and the Split-Man" the novel, as it evolved, could not easily sustain as an almost constant presence a character whose mode of operation was primarily supernatural and his role symbolical. Evidently, Lewis, in the latter stages of composition of The Apes of God, decided that Ratner required a more concrete function in the novel—one that could justify his ubiquity. So Ratner the servile demon--Ratner the Jinn--was made to take on the role of business manager.

Zagreus tells him that he was chosen to be "the devil of my Morality" (Apes, 448/467) because he was first to hand and demonstrated financial "talent" (Apes, 448/468). But the references to his "financial genius" (Apes, 448/467) and his role as the "business-man" (Apes, 337/353; 338/355) were added in a late stage of composition, on the novel's page proofs.[38] The less emblematic, less archetypally demonic character who moves through the novel in its final version seems to have developed as a corollary of the less exotic thematic and narrative directions the novel itself was made to take as Lewis broadened the base of his satire in response to his growing politico-social consciousness.

Although Lewis modified his characterization of Ratner as an archtypical embodiment of evil, he allowed him to remain a detestable creature. Zagreus calls him a "dung-beetle" (Apes, 138/148) and in reference to Ratner, says: "He is my anti-genius! . . . It is a good thing to vomit at least once a day" (Apes, 508/531). The fact of Ratner's evil nature's being transferred from the archetypally demonic to the merely mean human makes him even more loathsome. Ratner, in fact, seems to have been made to bear unrelenting retributive punishment for an offence that is not apparent in the novel itself, unless one recognizes that as his character developed during the composition of The Apes of God he became, in Lewis's eyes, not only the split-man but also the embodiment of what Lewis, in his protracted critical response to the editors of the Paris-based little magazine, transition, called "the diabolical principle."[39]

John Rodker's translations from Comte de Lautréamont's "The Lay of Maldoror," the misanthropic, satanic poems published by Rodker himself in 1924 and in transition in 1927, formed the basis of much of Lewis's criticism of the feverish diabolism advocated by this surrealist journal and its editors. The principle of tortured self-expression and "loudly-advertised malevolent scorn"[40] so evident in Lautréamont's work, together with its manifest "obsessional attachment to apocalyptic images of horror and destruction"[41] served, in Lewis's eyes, to breed the very attitude of rage and intolerant hatred displayed in the keen disillusioned mind of Ratner, the ape-devil, the "old spirit that wills the evil" (Apes, 510/531). The psychology of hatred demonstrated in the universal disaffection of the Rodker/ Ratner type was, Lewis had argued forcefully in The Art of Being Ruled, seriously subversive; it was, in fact, he believed, the "great principle of all violent revolutionary action,"[42] the "twin of armed political revolt."[43]

Over the years Lewis had created in Ratner a character who, besides performing the pragmatic role of business manager, was the embodiment both of the compartmentalization of human experience and the diabolical principle. If the many facets of the split-man's character do not, in the end, seem to fit easily together to form a coherent character, the ideational function of Ratner as split-man and demon is clear: in both these manifestations he contributes to the destructive fever of confusion and discouragement that Lewis perceived to be advancing the collapse of Western culture as he then preferred to understand it.

14. THE LIONEL KEINS

a. The "Pseudo-Proust"

After meeting Wyndham Lewis for the first time, in the spring or summer of 1929, Marjorie Firminger, sensing that she had just been "in the presence of the most extraordinary human being" she had ever met, found herself in a "breathless state of excitement."[1] "I have no power of total recall," she wrote afterwards.

> All I remember is that almost at once he began asking questions about the Bright Young People and their parties and that I was delighted that the questions were so direct and gossipy, that I could answer some of them, and that he didn't appear 'highbrow' at all.[2]

She eagerly anticipated further contact with Lewis, and was pleased when he invited her and her house-mate, Elliott Seabrooke (the painter and illustrator of books for Nancy Cunard's Hours Press) to spend an evening with him at his Bayswater flat. Again, Lewis expressed interest in her knowledge of London's party-set and so Firminger, determined to cement her fresh social ties with him, set herself the task of going to all the parties she could "to get gossip"[3] for this man whom she found so fascinating,[4] to gather stories about people whom, she recalled, he "seemed to like hearing about but would never waste his time seeing."[5] It was in the context of her self-appointed and sustained[6] role as purveyor of "chit" that Firminger wrote to Lewis about their mutual acquaintance, Sydney Schiff, some time soon after the publication of *The Apes of God*:

> Edward came here last night. He is most impressed with The Apes of God--thinks it extremely good especially the ~~Schiff~~ [sic] Kein part. . . . He hasn't heard from Schiff again but expects to any day & is going to ask him what he thinks about the book. He (E) thinks that Schiff will still try to see you, & say my dear fellah, brilliant, brilliant--but you haven't got us *quite* right, you know--not *quite*!--with a note of triumph.[7]

Sydney Schiff, the subject of this "bit of chit," was to appear again in Firminger's writing. Many years later, in her intimate girlish memoir of Lewis in the late 1920s, Firminger recalled the process by which she first acquired a copy of The Apes of God. Referring to an 8 June 1930 letter in which she asked Lewis to lend her a copy of the novel, she remarks upon his failure to respond to her request and mentions her discovery of the Schiff-character in Lewis's book:

> eventually I pawned something and bought a copy of the APES OF GOD No. 697 (signed). Reverently I carried it home--in weight alone it seemed worth £3.3.0. . . .
>
> I flicked over more and more pages till I came to the section headed 'CHEZ LIONEL KEIN ESQ.,' when I caught my breath. For it was then that I realised that Lionel Kein had been founded on Sidney Schiff, the very man that Lewis, Elliott and I had discussed during our first meeting, and whom I myself had used as a model for 'Parl' in my JAM TO-DAY.[8]

Schiff, as Firminger states, figured prominently as Lionel Kein in The Apes of God.[9] Like the fictional Kein, one of the most memorable of Lewis's apes, one who wrote under the pen-name, Simon Cressy, Schiff composed fiction, first using the nom de plume Geoffrey Stone[10] and then that by which he is most remembered, if at all: Stephen Hudson. He wrote eight novels[11] and two collections of short fiction published between 1913 and 1930, but his work has been given serious attention by only a handful of reviewers. Indeed, even in his own lifetime he received little sustained critical attention outside that shown him by Edwin Muir,[12] who, in his first article on Schiff's work (a review of his fourth novel, Prince Hempseed [1923]), hailed the elder Schiff as a "promising young writer"[13] and so won for himself a cameo-role in The Apes of God, as Keithie of Ravelstone, the young journalist who "discovers" Lionel Kein.[14]

In spite of Muir's enthusiastic praise, and the more recent protestations of a few critics like Walter Allen and Martin Seymour-Smith,[15] Schiff's work has never emerged from its position of relative obscurity in the history of letters. That his name belongs in the chronicles of high society rather than in the annals of literary history (an idea affirmed in Lewis's treatment of him in The Apes of God) is reinforced by T. S. Eliot's obituary tribute to Violet Schiff,[16] who, Eliot remarks, along with her husband, played a significant social role in the art world of the early twentieth century. Writing "in the hope that some future chronicler of the history of art and letters in our time may give to Sydney and Violet Schiff the place which is their due," Eliot states:

> In the 1920s the Schiffs' hospitality, generosity, and encouragement meant much to a number of young artists and writers of whom I was one. The Schiffs' acquaintance was cosmopolitan, and their interests embraced all the arts. At their house I met, for example, Delius and Arthur Symons, and the first Viscountess Rothermere, who founded The Criterion under my editorship. Middleton Murry and Katherine Mansfield knew their house, and Wyndham Lewis and Charles Scott Moncrieff, and many others.[17]

Schiff's wealth--inherited from his father, who had been a successful banker--allowed him to demonstrate freely his love of art in the role of patron. His involvement in the art world of the 1920s, where Lewis first encountered him, is recalled in some detail in a talk on the wealthy dilettante prepared by Schiff's friend, Jack Isaacs, for the B.B.C.'s Third Programme in 1949:

> He bought the work, or helped the struggles, of the most interesting artists of the day, and artists are difficult people to help. He knew Epstein at the time of the Oscar Wilde Memorial, knew Gaudier-

> Brzeska in his studio under the railway arches, the young Gertler, Bomberg, William Roberts, Currie and Isaac Rosenberg. In their house Marinetti thundered his Futurist doctrines and Caruso parodied him. The walls were hung with pictures by Wyndham Lewis, Picasso, Chirico and John Nash, Roberts, Gertler, Van Gogh and Matisse. There were friendships, warm friendships, with Katherine Mansfield and with Delius. Hudson [Schiff] was a firm admirer of T. S. Eliot's poetry and a fierce propagandist for 'Prufrock', and together with his old friend, Frank Rutter, he was concerned with the editing of the periodical Art and Letters in which appeared the new names of Aldous Huxley, Richard Aldington, Herbert Read, Wyndham Lewis, Ezra Pound, Dorothy Richardson, Katherine Mansfield, T. S. Eliot, Wilfred Owen and the Sitwells, of Modigliani, Wadsworth and Guevara, and in which [he] himself wrote one of the earliest accounts of Marcel Proust.[18]

In a tribute that follows Schiff's own obituary in the Times, the writer—identified only by the initials G.W.A.--remarks that Schiff, as "one of the first to appreciate the talent of Picasso and Epstein," did much in his time "to encourage the taste for contemporary painters and sculptors."[19] Here it is again Schiff's social function--as one who had an active and all-embracing interest in the arts--that is given precedence over his role as author. Alluding only in passing to Schiff's fictional "family saga in six volumes" the author of the tribute remarks that Schiff came "notably to the fore" in the world of letters only when he was invited to contribute to C. K. Scott Moncrieff's Marcel Proust: An English Tribute (1923).[20]

* * *

Schiff had been introduced to the work of Proust a couple of years after Swann's Way was published in 1915 and his admiration for the French author gave rise to friendship and an active correspondence that spanned the last few years of Proust's life and figured prominently in the 1932 edition of Proust's letters (where twenty-four of the novelist's letters to Schiff are transcribed).

Indeed, Schiff's professional admiration for Proust[21] and his social association with this man (probably the most admired contemporary writer of his time) had great significance for him personally. In the nineteen-twenties he became, in Scott Moncrieff's words "the most intimate English friend of Proust's later years"[22] and when Scott Moncrieff's own translation of Proust's great novel, Remembrance of Things Past was cut short by his untimely death in 1929, it was Schiff who completed the work by translating volume twelve: "Time Regained." (This translation--done "notoriously badly," according to Martin Seymour-Smith--was first published by Chatto & Windus in 1931.)

Schiff's unequivocal admiration for this French author, whose "deep 'mentalism' and personal bias"[23] as it was demonstrated in his writings Lewis objected to and whom Lewis held up, in "The Revolutionary Simpleton," as a prime example of the time-mind in operation became, in subsequent years, a source of discussion and, indeed, a point of argument for Lewis and Schiff. It is not surprising, then, that Schiff recognized a reference to a "pseudo-Proust" in a brief fictional excerpt published in The Criterion in April 1924 as an allusion to himself, nor that large portions of dialogue in "Chez Lionel Kein Esq."--the promised story of the "pseudo-Proust" published six years after "The Apes of God" fragment--centre on the character of high society fiction as exemplified especially in Proust's narrative art.

* * *

That Proust was a subject of debate between Lewis and the Schiffs is evident not only in The Apes of God itself (where pages of dialogue between Zagreus and the Keins are focused on the French author and his fictional mode) but also in at least one letter from Schiff to Lewis, prompted by Schiff's reading of Lewis's critical statements about Proust in "The Revolutionary Simpleton" in the spring of 1927. On 21 March of that year he wrote: "Proust does not, truly speaking, romanticise his past. . . . He reproduces its romantic tonality, himself detached from it."[24] It was precisely this position--that the fictionist who, like Proust, uses the material of real life as his subject-matter can write from a detached perspective--that lay at the centre of Zagreus's argument with Kein in The Apes of God:

> 'The Fiction we are discussing pretends to approach its material with the detachment of the chemist or of the surgeon. But in fact what happens is that, as it is Fiction, not truth--art and not science--the work usually of a writer for the salon and the tea-party (and not of a chemist in his laboratory, absorbed in inventions destined to very different, less personal ends) such "science" is of a superficial description. The air of being "scientific" and the paraphernalia of "detachment," used by the average literary workman, result in something the opposite of what you are led to anticipate. The Fiction produced in this manner becomes more personal than ever before.' (Apes, 259/272)

Schiff's letter, written in defense of Proust's method,[25] provides a context for the Proust-related debate in the "Chez Lionel Kein Esq." chapter of The Apes of God, a debate dominated by Zagreus's broadcast of Pierpoint's opinions. The discussion of Proust in the novel begins with the following interchange between Zagreus and Kein:

> 'I've always regarded you, Li, as--can you guess?--a perfect Proust-character! How does that accommodate you?'
>
> 'Very well!' Kein replied with vehement rapidity, his eyes flashing and darting. 'Very well!--. . . .'
>
> 'Well, then, upon the coming of Proust I said--"Ah, there is Li's author!" A Li in search of an author!' Horace added with great joviality in a lower key.

> 'Six lies if you like!' Kein retorted fiercely, his face changing to its solemn mask. At the name of Proust he ran up his state-flag. Proust, when he entered his soul, made him more self-confident than the Viking, even. He was ready for anything under that banner. He began to deliver himself with heroic emphasis, with the full roulade and rattle of his most withering drawl--like snarling drums set rolling to celebrate an arcane victory.
>
> 'I should certainly take it as a great compliment to be associated in your mind in any way at all with Marcel Proust. That would be the way to flatter me if you wished to!' (Apes, 246/258-59)

When Isabel is subsequently introduced into the conversation, Zagreus addresses her on the same matter:

> '--Li here says that he wouldn't mind what Proust wrote about him--or what figure he cut in his books, if he could only be *in* them. He says he's such a devotee of Truth, and that he recognizes in Proust such a master of it--especially of his, Li's, truth--that he would pose gladly for his pen. *Any* portrait he would welcome, provided it was signed "Proust." What is your attitude upon that question, Isabel?'
>
> Isabel was indulgent, airy and decisive.
>
> 'I feel like Lionel!' she panted lightly. 'But I don't mind what happens to me in that way in any case. If I were consulted, I should say *certainly*--let me be dealt with by Proust, sooner than anyone else I can think of. By all means!' (Apes, 253/266)

The Schiffs would, presumably, have recognized this verbal interchange in the text when they read it in 1930, for the broadcast seems indeed to have been a replay of a debate which Lewis and the Schiffs engaged in some time before *The Apes of God* appeared. At least an excerpt from the first draft of a memoir written by Mrs. Lewis about this era in her husband's life, and recently published in the official organ of the Wyndham Lewis Society, *Enemy News*, suggests that this is so. Of the years approaching 1930, when *The Apes of God* appeared, she wrote:

7

> Becoming fashionable with various authors during the twenties was the satirical portrait in novels. D. H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, Osbert Sitwell, Michael

> Arlen etc, were the first in the field. Wyndham Lewis was the 'victim' in at least two or three books. Though made aware of this by friends, he saw by ignoring the books in question that the authors got no publicity. Harry Melville, bumping into Lewis on a bus, weepingly protested over Osbert's cruelty in his particularly virulent picture of Melville in his latest production.
>
> T. S. Eliot and Lewis were dining regularly at Mr and Mrs Sydney Schiff's home in Cambridge Circus, staying at their Eastbourne residence where they were thoroughly spoilt. After dinner T. S. Eliot would read his latest work and discussion on it would take place. After his meeting with Harry Melville, Lewis was dining with the Schiffs and recounted his encounters. Inevitably Proust's name came to the fore but, as Schiff was a friend of his, he naturally was defending the practice and ended with declaring he would not mind at all being satirised. And certainly he proved the truth of this when The Apes of God was eventually published. One of the few civilised people here, more French than the French. So they remained friends until their death, but in all probability they did not read the book![26]

If one can accept Mrs. Lewis's reminiscence at face value, one can go on to argue with some confidence that the Lionel Kein chapter of The Apes of God was in part a direct extension of the Lewis-Schiff debate of the 1920s. In other words Lewis set out, in The Apes of God, to demonstrate the truth of his own position that any individual arbitrarily translated into fiction is "without exception . . . objectively unbearable" (Apes, 257/270):

> Let us put it in this way. You would not like to look into such a mirror and suddenly find yourself there. Not so cunningly sucked in and eternally fixed as happens with a master like Proust. Imagine your sensations if you can! I do not wish to be disobliging or rude--but flesh and blood will not stand that! (Apes, 255/268)

The Schiffs insisted that they did not mind seeing themselves objectively portrayed in fiction. Lewis reflected their attitude in The Apes of God in Lionel Kein's assertion that he would "'consider it _well worth the privilege_ . . . to be treated in _any_ way by [Proust] that he thought fit!'" (_Apes_, 248/261). Lewis determined, in the novel, then, to give them the opportunity to demonstrate the authenticity of their position. The argument he had himself presented to the Schiffs on occasions like the one recalled by Mrs. Lewis he put into the mouth of Zagreus; as Zagreus speaks, the character Kein (that is, Schiff) recognizes the words of Pierpoint (that is, Lewis) in his broadcast script:

> 'My dear Zagreus, excuse me! But what you have just said is word for word what Pierpoint said the last time you were both here together--and about Proust--it was about Proust, if you remember, that we were talking at the time--.' (_Apes_, 258/271)

Near the beginning of this episode Zagreus had warned Schiff: "'I told you I could beat you at your own game'" (_Apes_, 246/259). This statement had been followed by an enquiry intended to alert Kein (and, presumably, Schiff, the reader) to a menacing presence in the wings: "'How is Pierpoint?' [Zagreus] enquired suddenly as if it had just come into his mind" (_Apes_, 246/259). Kein (in Lewis's projected reflection of Schiff, the reader) is openly ruffled at this reference to his antagonist:

> The Punch-aplomb at this further name went back. Horeb and the Forty Years was fully reinstated upon the old clubman's flushed mask, serenely at bay, contemptuous of the 'paltriness' of his friend's weapons. (_Apes_, 246/259)

By treating Schiff as he himself saw fit, Lewis "flattered" him (in Schiff's terms of reference) by transposing him into fiction while eliciting from him the discomfort that Lewis predicted the satiric victim would experience:

> What I really am trying to say is that none of us are able in fact, in the matter of quite naked truth, to support that magnifying glass, focussed upon us,

> any more than the best complexion could support such examination. Were we mercilessly transposed into Fiction, by the eye of a Swift, for instance, the picture would be intolerable, both for Fiction and for us. No more than there are 'good' and 'bad' people, are there such people on the one hand as can pass over into a truly inquisitorial Fiction with flying colours, and those who, upon the other hand--so translated--are disgraced. Every individual without exception is in that sense objectively unbearable. (*Apes*, 257/270)

At the same time, he left no way open for the Schiffs to react to "Chez Lionel Kein Esq." than to say something not far removed from Marjorie Firminger's projection of their response: "my dear fellah, brilliant, brilliant--but you haven't got us *quite* right, you know--not *quite*!--"[27] When Sydney Schiff wrote to Lewis on 3 April 1931,[28] ostensibly to remark on elements that interested him in Lewis's *Hitler*, he began:

> Violet has never ceased feeling friendly and sympathetic towards you and Zagreus has not succeeded in extinguishing or even modifying my admiration for Pierrepoint.[29]

b. Patrons

Among the several people who took an active interest in Wyndham Lewis's creative productions (both pictorial and literary) in the decade of the 1920s was Sydney Schiff, who acted intermittently as patron to the financially impoverished artist. Lewis and Schiff's artist-patron relationship, which was the motive and source for the "Chez Lionel Kein Esq." chapter of *The Apes of God*, was established at least as early as November 1920 and continued without major incident for over three years. Between 25 November 1920 and 13 October 1924, £712 passed from Schiff's hands into Lewis's. Much of this was payment for paintings and drawings (some commissioned); a portion of it was to help finance Lewis's literary enterprises. Schiff contributed £50, for example, for the publication of The Tyro,[30] the second number of which included a fragment of his own novel, Prince Hempseed, published in full in 1923. Lewis seems, on this occasion at least, to have provided Schiff, in return, with some editorial assistance, for on 5 September 1922 he wrote to Violet Schiff: "I hope on your return to see the Mss. of 'Prince Hempseed' once more. I am glad you think that the alterations improve it."[31]

The money Schiff sent to Lewis was generally advanced in the form of loans, which Lewis most often repaid with drawings or paintings (or, one should perhaps say, with promises to deliver such).[32] Sometimes Schiff directed an alternate manner in which a particular debt should be cancelled, as in 1922, for example, when he sent Lewis £20 as the latter left for Paris, and instructed him, in return, to try to arrange to meet with Marcel Proust, Schiff's hero and friend.

The relatively constant liaison between Schiff and Lewis, although apparently beneficial to both parties, did not long remain an amicable one. A group of letters in the Lewis collection at Cornell provides a documentation—however fragmentary--of the faltering relationship.[33] Letters from Sydney Schiff and his wife, Violet, give evidence of the fact that near the end of 1923 there was some uneasiness in the relationship, evidently arising from Lewis's unexplained withdrawal from the established patterns of their social intercourse. In a letter dated 25 February 1924 Violet Schiff expressed her apprehension that she and Sydney had done something to offend Lewis. Commenting on the eclipse of Lewis's friendly feelings toward herself and her husband and remarking on what she called the "shock & chill" of Lewis's silence, she wrote:

> It is not like me to express a cordial regard for a person at the very moment when his own friendly feelings appear to have suffered an eclipse but you can interpret this exceptional behaviour on my part as an indication of the warmth of my sympathy & of Sydney's for you.[34]

But before the Schiffs had received acknowledgement of Violet's letter or affirmation of Lewis's continuing friendship, they were troubled further by what seemed to them to be the inexplicable behaviour of their apparently estranged associate. With the publication in *The Criterion* in April 1924 of an excerpt entitled "The Apes of God" Lewis contributed further to the discordance in the relationship.[35] Here he had written:

> It is with this second active category of *amateurs*, these productive 'apes,' that I may be useful to you. I can point them out to you, and find means for you to be among them, appreciate the truth of what I have described, and draw your own conclusions. *In a little artificial world of carefully fostered self-esteem I will show you a pseudo-Proust*.[36]

The "pseudo-Proust" was, of course, Sydney Schiff, yet this derogatory reference to him (only thinly disguised) seems to have escaped Violet when she first read the excerpt, for on 26 April 1924 she wrote to Lewis, enthusiastically affirming the truth and method of the piece:

> I have just read your "Apes of God" with great interest & enjoyment. All you say seems to me only too true & as always I like the way you say it & wish for more when I read anything of yours.[37]

Lewis attempted to answer Violet's letter by telephoning ~~her~~, but failed to find the Schiffs at home. Violet herself, in the meantime, was alerted—either by another reader or through her own further examination of the excerpt--to Lewis's reference to her husband, and on 29 April 1924 wrote to Lewis expressing apprehension about the threat implicit in the denigrating allusion to the "pseudo-Proust":

> I want to comment on (not protest against) a line in your 'Apes of God.' I gather it refers to Sydney. As I care even more what you think than what you say or write, I want you to know that S. wrote the greater part of 'Richard Kurt' in 1911. . . . [A]t the same time he planned the end of that book & the rest of the series several of which are still unwritten. Proust's first book 'Swan' was published in 1915 & fell into my hands a couple of years later. Excuse these details & it may be that you meant it in a less literal sense & merely saw Sydney as a man masquerading as, not aping, one of his Gods, & naturally I don't share this view--but never mind. There are deep truths in 'Apes of God' & I admire it & enjoyed reading it immensely.[38]

Sydney Schiff himself, in an attempt, apparently, to stave off a confrontation with Lewis, wrote about the "pseudo-Proust" statement a few days later, on 4 May 1924. The opening of his letter indicates that Lewis was experiencing, already in 1924, a preview of the fury and indignation that his satirical portraiture in The Apes of God was to arouse:

> Let there be no confused association of me with others whose resentment your Apes of God has aroused.
>
> I want to make my personal attitude towards you clear. If I am to understand from what you wrote about the pseudo-Proust that my work is included by you in that category of the Apes of God who 'produce a little art themselves . . . but less than the "real thing",' then my work has failed so far as you are concerned and I regret it.
>
> If my work depended on the approval of any man, even yourself, it would not be worth doing and I should not do it. But our personal relations have not been based upon your approval of my work but on my admiration for yours. So far nothing is changed.
>
> On the other hand if you include me among those 'Apes of God proper' whose 'unwanted & unnecessary labours' are the cause of envy of you and of malevolence

> towards you or any other 'effective artist', then you have so completely misread my psychology, so utterly misinterpreted my motives and my principles that I must perforce cease to credit you with the insight and perceptive capacity with which my own intuition has hitherto led me to endow you.
>
> Be all this as it may I want to see you and talk with you while we are in London where we are going for a week tomorrow. Will you ring up any time after four o'clock tomorrow Monday and either V or I could meet you wherever you like or come & have dinner alone with us.[39]

The following day (5 May 1924) the Schiffs received a letter from Lewis in which he apparently asked for a more complete explanation of their concerns.[40] Both Violet and Sydney responded to this request, which itself represented Lewis's breaking of the "long fast": the period of time during which he had withdrawn from any contact with them.[41] Violet, somewhat abashed by Lewis's pleading confusion about the "pseudo-Proust" question and his simultaneously expressing his deep regard for them both, felt compelled to justify her reasons for having drawn inferences about Sydney as the "pseudo-Proust" in the first place. She wrote:

> I will gladly explain my letter more fully. . . . [E]ven the sentence in which I saw what I thought to be a distorted & erroneous version of ourselves I considered witty & incisive--
>
> Our inference that the Pseudo Proust was Sydney was partly because you were aware of our admiration for & friendship with him, partly because superficially there is a similarity of outline in the two undertakings but far more because of the context of the sentence already referred to. There are two further points--that both men began writing at a mature age & both had independent means--[42]

Her letter closes with a dinner invitation to Lewis, whom she had not "clapped eyes on," she said, for "about six months." The following day she wrote again, adding what amounts to a postscript to the 5 May letter: "It occurs to me that my attitude to you requires still further explanation." She conveyed once more, in what followed, her confusion about the "pseudo-Proust" issue, her feeling that she had illegitimately misjudged Lewis and embarrassed herself ("You may say to yourself 'If V. was pained or hurt at what she read into my article about herself & S . . . '"). But she was not willing to accept Lewis's assurances at face value: "I am rather in the position of a wise old man who looks at his son & says to himself 'Why does he see me in so distorted a fashion when I see him so clearly.'"[43] Sydney, in the meanwhile, wrote to Lewis as well:

> I leave to Violet your letter which we found on arrival this afternoon but the last sentence concerns me for in it you assure her of your deep regard for us both.
>
> There are very few people in this world I care the smallest atom about. Of these few, you are one. Your life is precious for the work it is in you to do, that no other man can do. You are beset by every sort of opposition & antagonism. I want to help you to overcome these obstructions.
>
> You will now be molested by those you have castigated in 'The Apes of God'. Very well. I want you to know that I shall stand by you at this crisis. Do let us meet soon.[44]

For the time being, then, after Violet's letter of 6 May 1924, the matter of the "pseudo-Proust" was put to rest and the dispute temporarily resolved. On 8 May 1924 Lewis spent a social evening with the couple and on the following day Schiff resumed his role as patron by enclosing, in a lengthy letter to Lewis, a cheque for £20. The letter itself consisted of a continuation of Schiff's side of a debate begun with Lewis the night before. The subject matter was the relationship between literature and politics. The letter contained no mention of the "pseudo-Proust" issue.

* * *

The Schiffs, who would not in May 1924 nor later have anticipated the tone or prominence of Lewis's portraiture of them in the figures of Lionel and Isabel Kein, appeared to be eager to forget the matter of the "pseudo-Proust" and to resume a friendly association with Lewis. In the intervening years, however, before The Apes of God appeared, the Lewis-Schiff relationship deteriorated further. It was characterized by mutual suspicions, accusations, and frustrations arising primarily, it would seem, from the nature of the personalities and from the thwarted expectations of both parties in the artist-patron arrangement. The sense of helplessness to which Schiff was driven in the affair is demonstrated in his written exclamation in a 11 November 1926 letter to Lewis, where he declared that he would never again in his life enter into a business relationship with an artist--least of all with him. "Least," he wrote, "because of my deep & lasting admiration and an underlying regard for you that are both unchangeable & must now be exposed to assault."[45] Schiff's statement of qualification concerning his business-relationship with Lewis (quoted directly above) pointed to the basic confusion of business and friendship that became one of the sources of tension and frustration for both parties. Lewis and Schiff were two people with widely-divergent expectations of each other: on the one side was Lewis, the artist, who wanted above all to be left alone to do creative work, supported financially by a non-interfering patron, willing and with the means to purchase his work. On the other, Schiff, the patron, who had a penchant for alternately dichotomizing and merging his relationship of patron with that of colleague and friend and whose various modes of intervention into Lewis's life--his notes and invitations, special requests, instructions, and "'unexpected visits'"[46]--were a source of irritation for the artist. In Lewis's eyes Schiff's role was straightforward: "'if one person desires to help another and is able to, that is a simple matter,'"[47] he wrote to Schiff in November 1924.

Lewis's expectations, buoyed by Schiff's unflinching praise of his work and creative potential, did not sit well with the patron whose frequent requests for gestures of reciprocity on Lewis's part (in the form of written acknowledgement of monies received or the delivery of promised goods) were not attended to. As Lewis seemed to grow ever more dependent on him financially, Schiff began to resent his persistent requests for more money and what seemed to him Lewis's untenable assumption that he, Schiff, could carry on his support apparently without the need to set limits on amounts of installments or on the duration of a seemingly continuous stream of increments. Consequently, Schiff deliberately and progressively withdrew from any further financial commitments to the artist, declaring--sometimes rather glibly (and always in the context of unqualified praise for Lewis's work)--that sending Lewis more money would put an undue strain on his financial resources:

> It is therefore painful besides regretful for me to have to declare to you that I can do nothing to alleviate the inconveniences and infelicities of your present situation.
>
> My position, the result of many imprudences, is financially embarrassed. I am compelled to retrench to a point that prevents my spending money on anything that is not demanded of me by the absurd manner of life to which we, in common with other (less intelligent) folk of our middling social stratum, are committed by tradition, by upbringing and by the long habits of self-indulgence.[48]

The tone of this and similar letters undoubtedly contributed to Lewis's ironic projection of Kein, the concerned but unwilling patron in The Apes of God:

> Kein inhaled the air, now beginning to be filled with tobacco smoke, with a deep and melancholy sound.
> 'Well as you know I've stuck to Pierpoint through thick and thin' he began to croak and boom: 'Isabel and I will never change in our regard for him--our deep regard! Once we give that we never take it back!' The stature of his magnanimity increased at every sentence. He finished his glass at one sharp throw, and filled it again from the bottle and syphon at his side. 'But that there are things about Pierpoint which even his most devoted friend would find it difficult to defend--that it is impossible to deny. I am sorry to say. I wish I could! Poor Pierpoint! I wish I could have helped him to--to, not to lay himself open to so much hostile criticism. What he will do now I really do not know--Isabel and I often ask each other that! We often wonder--. We talk a lot about it. It worries us very much sometimes. We can't help, even now, being concerned for him. He has no money. What I'm terribly afraid of is that he may--well really go under--a man like that depends so much upon the support of a few friends--good friends!' (Apes, 298-99/313)

* * *

Even with access to the relatively large number of personal documents that shed light on the Lewis-Schiff affair, it is difficult to determine the precise nature of the events, motives, and emotions that fed a relationship so unusual that even Lewis's enormous and deliberate lapse in tact, published in 1930, failed to extinguish it. If indeed The Apes of God was, as this reference to "tact" suggests, part of an aggressive social game extended over almost a decade, then it can be regarded more or less simply--on one level, at least--as Lewis's legitimate response to Schiff's "tactless" toying with his financial vulnerability and his very way of life. The rules of the particular mode of social intercourse engaged in by this pair were evident, it seems, to numerous contemporaries, who later reflected in writing on what they heard and saw. Schiff's own lack of tact, (to retain the metaphor) for example, was evident not only in his statements to Lewis about his commitment to "long habits of self-indulgence,"[49] but also in several contemporary anecdotes dealing specifically with his behaviour in relation to the impoverished artist in general and Lewis in particular. Marjorie Firminger, for example, in her obscure and fleeting portrait of Schiff in the character, Parl, in Jam To-day (1931), makes reference to Schiff's apparent insensitivity to the struggling artist:

> 'But you're saying that doesn't carry very much weight,' piped a poor poet, who was getting very tight on Parl's brandy. 'Most of us wander into the world you despise because for a few hours or days it gives us food and big rooms and a new pattern of people. You're never starved.'
>
> 'My dear fellah,' kicked out Parl, knocked sideways a little. 'What nonsense. Worse things than starvation--my God I've known them.'
>
> 'I don't think there's anything worse,' said the poet.
>
> 'Those sentiments, dear fellah,' said Parl, 'are just what stops your work from being really good. Too damn material--that's what you are.'[50]

David Garnett, in his autobiography, The Flowers in the Forest (1955), recalls a dinner at Lady Rothermere's which was attended by the Schiffs (along with Eliot and others):

> After dinner Wyndham Lewis joined us, for Lady Rothermere was interested in modern painting and it was as a painter that Lewis was then best known. I was amused to hear Schiff draw him into a corner and hold forth upon the inequities of the income tax, which had reduced him to being a very poor man. It was the kind of subject which Schiff liked talking about to impoverished artists.[51]

John Rothenstein, similarly, in the volume of his autobiography entitled Summer's Lease (1965) recalls a rude reception he received at the hands of the Schiffs and conjectures that it could very well have been a similar experience of the Schiffs' personal insensitivity that "brought upon this couple so terrible a retribution . . . in The Apes of God."[52] Rothenstein once pursued the fact of the Schiff-Kein identity with Lewis himself and records, in another volume of his autobiography entitled Brave Day, Hideous Night (1966) that Lewis "reluctantly agreed" that as Lionel Kein in the roman à clef, "Sidney stood for nothing but himself."[53] In his additional comments to Rothenstein on that occasion, Lewis indicated that he had regarded Schiff primarily as a patron who had disappointed him and had failed to live up to his expectations. Consider, in this context, Zagreus's last remarks about Lionel Kein:

> 'Kein on one occasion got rather excited and offered to set up Vernède in a bookshop--for art-books, first-editions and so forth. Next day of course Vernède received a note to the effect that Li much regretted, but that on making enquiries at his bank he found--or that owing to unexpected calls he was unable--or that thinking it over he did not see his way--or that he was so upset at the thought of Vernède abandoning his literary work and wasting his time selling books to stupid people--in fine, that he--. The old old story! It is always the same--Kein never fails one, he knows he never fails one--in that way. (Apes, 315-16/330)

Lewis's comments are not surprising in the context of what we know about his dealings with Schiff. They point to the degree of frustration he must have experienced as a serious artist (without uncomplicated access to money) among amateurs who, so unlike himself, had independent means that left them free to work where and when they chose to do so and free to manipulate the lives of those others who depended, intermittently at least, on their support.

* * *

The clash of perceptions and expectations of each party appears to have been the most important element contributing to the breaking down of the Lewis-Schiff relationship. The key factors that defined Lewis's view of the arrangement were that Schiff was a wealthy man who could buy the leisure time in which to work in the arts and he was not; and that Schiff had immediate and constant access to at least the limited amount of money required to support the activities of an artist like Lewis, but simply (and arbitrarily) preferred to withhold assistance. Or so it seemed to Lewis, whose view conflicted directly with Schiff's insistence that although his intentions toward Lewis were well-meaning, his resources were limited. It is not difficult to see, in these circumstances, the source of the discussion, in The Apes of God, between Kein and Zagreus on the matter of Kein's wealth in relation to his disintegrating relationship with Pierpoint:

> Zagreus laughed--'How is Pierpoint?' he enquired suddenly as if it had just come into his mind. . . .
> 'Very well, I believe. I have no reason to think otherwise.' Li drawled, with lofty blankness of expressionless eyes. 'Very well I should think.'
> 'Very well?'
> 'Very I should think.'
> 'Do you see him now, Kein?' Zagreus asked softly.
> Kein screwed up his face in a sweet grin.
> 'I haven't seen him recently.'
> 'No?'
> 'Not very recently.'
> 'Ah!--Money, I suppose?' Horace enquired absent-mindedly. 'These beastly artists! We rich men have to put up with a great deal from those artist-fellows. They--.'
> 'I don't know if you're a rich man, Zagreus,' Kein exclaimed, very upset. 'I know I'm not.--I wish I were. If I were, if--.'
> 'Of course not, Li,' said Zagreus soothingly, 'I was only speaking jokingly. Of course not Li!'
> He continued to gaze at his host, lost in thought, and to go through the pretence of reflectively stroking

> his chin, and offering all other signs of a musing abstraction--while Kein stared silently and resentfully back for a moment. (Apes, 246-47/259-60)

Whether or not Schiff was wealthy enough to support Lewis in the manner in which Lewis hoped that he would is secondary to the fact that Lewis believed that Schiff had vast financial resources and was simply unwilling to provide Lewis with the support that would allow the latter to carry on the unremunerative work for which Schiff continued to encourage and praise him.

It was undoubtedly this disparity of circumstances and opinion, combined with Schiff's own sustained literary activity carried on in the comfortable contexts of his home in Cambridge Square, country house in Buckinghamshire, the grand hotels of Europe, and London's own Savoy, that provided the context for Lewis's suspicions (expressed in The Apes of God) that the withdrawal of financial support of the impoverished artist by productive apes like Sydney Schiff, was a malevolent gesture arising out of jealousy, as suggested in "The Encyclical." Here Lewis quite unequivocally isolated Schiff (and the Sitwells, for example) as primary examples of those responsible for creating in the world of art between the wars an "atmosphere of restlessness, insecurity and defamation" (Apes, 122/130).

> [S]ome (born with a happy or unhappy knack not possessed by their less talented fellows) produce a little art themselves--more than the inconsequent daubing and dabbing we have noticed, but less than the 'real thing.' And with this class you come to the Ape of God proper. For with these unwonted and unnecessary labours, and the *amour-propre* associated with their results, envy steps in. The complication of their malevolence that ensues is curious to watch. But it redoubles, in the natural course of things, the fervour of their caprice or ill-will to the 'professional' activities of the effective artist--that rare man born for an exacting intellect-

> ual task, and devoting his life unsparingly to it. (Apes, 122/130)

Engaged in "the propagation of the second-rate," yet demonstrating a strong desire to be identified in the public mind with legitimate art and intelligence, these people were, Lewis contends, "the unpaying guests of the house of art" (Apes, 121/129) and must be removed from the place which they, like the troublesome "supers" who invaded the Elizabethan stage, occupied illegitimately and to the detriment and irritation of the primary players. They were like these presumptuous intruders, who could be seen

> sitting among the actors, to display in that way their personalities to the best advantage, and whose stupid and insolent chatter was such a source of irritation to the players, apart from their inconvenient presence upon the boards when a play was in progress. (Apes, 122/130)

* * *

Sydney Schiff's June 1925 statement that his own self-indulgent habits prevented his financially supporting another artist's activities effectively terminated this period of Schiff's patronage of Lewis's work and, arousing Lewis's resentment, extinguished the artist's desire for any further social contact with the couple. The letters that the Schiffs continued to write to Lewis from June 1925 until July 1930, when The Apes of God appeared, went unanswered, for the most part. Categorized by subject, they tended to fall roughly into three groups: (a) invitations to dinner, (b) praise and encouragement following the publication of each subsequent new Lewis work,[54] and (c) attempts (by Sydney) to engage in philosophical discussion related to issues raised in some of Lewis's most recent publications. Despite the invitations that the Schiffs continued to extend to him[55] on numerous occasions over the next several years, Lewis tended to withdraw from further social encounters. A possible exception to this occurred near the end of 1926, when Lewis sent Schiff a note to which the latter replied:

> We should both greatly like to see you but we don't want our meeting to be in any way spoilt by references to 'outstanding' matters.[56]

There is further mention of this proposed meeting in two subsequent letters: 11 November and 16 November. That it had not been preceded by recent social encounters is suggested by Schiff's comment to Lewis: "You may remark some change in me, you may not. I've learnt a good deal since I last saw you."[57] There is no evidence in the correspondence to suggest that the meeting did or did not take place.[58]

On one other occasion, in January 1929, Lewis accidentally encountered Sydney and invited the Schiffs to visit him later that week; a few days later he withdrew his invitation, stating that he had contracted influenza. Schiff responded to the news of Lewis's illness with a brief note in which he wrote: "Please don't forget us. We greatly want to see you after all this time."[59] Yet no meeting was arranged. On 29 March 1929 Schiff wrote to Lewis again, stating:

> You are one of the very few mature men who are alive & known to me in person or work I can think about with patience and of whom I have any personal hope. . . . [W]e both long to hear you talk and to take away with us the memory of a few hours spent with you against that of years during which we have been deprived of you.[60]

Following another letter, dated 11 June 1929, written in praise of Lewis's most recent publication ("My lean and decrepit loins are strained by the continuous outbreaks of hilarity your Paleface has provoked"),[61] Schiff wrote a letter (on 29 October of that year) expressing anticipation of The Apes of God:

> Miss Sketcher (my Miss S.) informs me that the Arthur Press are not sending out copies of 'The Apes of God' but that you are dealing with this.
>
> May I send for two copies & save you trouble of delivering them? I am/We are, as always, impatient to read your new work; my admiration & interest have not decreased--nor Violet's.[62]

The only remaining letter from Schiff to Lewis before the publication of The Apes of God was written on 19 November 1929 and contained a laudatory message from Scott Moncrieff. Schiff again expressed his desire to see Lewis: "Are we ever going to see you again?"[63]

* * *

If there was any correspondence between the estranged parties--Lewis and Schiff--directly after the publication of The Apes of God, it is not available in the major repositories of these letters at Cornell nor The British Library. That the Schiffs had attempted to re-establish contact with Lewis soon after the appearance of Lionel and Isabel Kein is suggested, however, by the first line of a letter from Schiff to Lewis, written nine months after the novel was released. Schiff began: "It is rather discouraging to write to you because you don't answer." Apparently in an attempt to lay the foundation for the renewed relationship with Lewis that he was seeking (or, as suggested above, to demonstrate the veracity of his assertion that, in Mrs. Lewis's words, "he would not mind at all being satirised"),[64] Schiff reassured the author that Zagreus had not succeeded in extinguishing his or Violet's feelings of friendliness, sympathy, and admiration for the author of The Apes of God.[65] Schiff's letter, dated 3 April 1931, was ostensibly written in response to Lewis's Hitler, which Schiff had just recently read.[66]

Some three weeks later the last letter from either of the Schiffs (that is, the last letter available at Cornell) was written from Violet Schiff to Lewis. It bears quoting in full:

> Dear Lewis. It is beastly hard lines on me that I may never see you--I want to see you more than ever since reading all your books including the 'apes of God' which is probably the finest of all--but it is not to rave about your books or express my admiration that I am writing to you. It is to say that it is a great loss to me that we should not be on friendly terms & meet occasionally. I have no object or design in wanting to meet you beyond the selfish wish to see you. If you don't want to meet Sydney that is no reason you should not meet me--but if you dislike me or are too indifferent towards me to want to meet me I want at least to have the satisfaction of telling you that I revel in every word you write & that I have an unchangeable regard for you. Do give me a chance while there is still time.
>
> Yours ever
> Violet[67]

How long it took Lewis to respond to this letter, if he ever did do so directly, is not evident. The next dated items of correspondence between the two parties are letters from Lewis to the Schiffs, a series of letters written in the late winter and early spring of 1933--almost two years after the letter transcribed above. These letters are included among the Schiff papers in The British Library. There are five in all, dated 20 February 1933 to 21 May 1933 and two more that appear to belong to the group, one dated 12 February (no year), and one undated. The renewed contact seems to have been initiated by Lewis, who appealed to Schiff for financial help during a period of bad health.[68] In the letter dated 20 February 1933 he expressed his gratitude to Schiff for a cheque of £50 (which he planned to repay in paintings): "Thank you again a thousand times for your [word unclear] and generous response, to the 'poor sick man', who, I hope, in a few weeks will be no longer that, and will be able to thank you in person."[69] So the artist-patron relationship was resumed, only, apparently, for the cycle of disappointed expectations to repeat itself. Lewis, ailing and unable to work, had appealed to Schiff for monetary aid. The discussions ensuing upon Lewis's request became, inevitably it seems, cause for grief. The last letter of the Lewis-Schiff correspondence, written in these circumstances, serves as a useful gloss on the whole history of related events that had already found expression in the grotesque parody (terrible and humorous at once) of Sydney and Violet Schiff as Lionel Kein and his wife Isabel. Lewis's letter was fragmented in its published form by W. K. Rose, whose editing in this instance distorted the circumstances which gave rise to this uncharacteristically emotional statement from the ailing and demoralized artist. Where Rose placed ellipses, Lewis had written: "Please do not think that I am insensible to the great generosity of this [cheque for £25], and your former cheque [£50] received in the middle of my illness, if I add a few words." He then referred to a conversation during which, he said, Schiff had led him to believe he would help him "more extensively at this very difficult juncture than you now say you are prepared to do."[70] It was in the context, once again, of disappointed expectations that he related to Schiff the miserable circumstances under which he had attempted to function as an artist during the decade that culminated with *The Apes of God* (the portions underlined were edited out by Rose, for whatever reasons):

> If I were well--if I had not been for six months unable to work--I should of course not be asking you for financial support. But how miserable it is

never to be able to have even a month's relief from financial worry, to enable one to do the best work possible, you are able to appreciate. Ten years ago I was forced to take a garden-studio (tin shack) built slap on the earth of a London garden (Adam and Eve Mews) because it was cheap. But even that I could not pay for and had to leave. My next and last attempt to rent a studio was in Holland Street. There within a very short time I had an eviction order against me. In despair at these conditions, I retired into rooms: and during the years that I have been writing books I have still produced spasmodically (and as my books achieved notoriety, have sold) pictures and drawings, usually small (as in a small room it is difficult to paint a large picture). Now I want to have this completely representative show, which I have never had the chance to hold, in the autumn of this year. No one--aside from a handful of people--has seen any work of mine, really, which represents what I am able to do in the matter of painting. The new work I have been completing (and which you expressed yourself as interested to see) I have had to do on a chair, for the simple reason that I have not, since my illness, had the money to spare to buy the necessary easel (price two pounds). You were good enough to suggest the other day that I should get a 'better' work-room than that at 31 Percy Street. But I owe nineteen pounds rent there, and under those circumstances (and seeing what my experience has been in the past with studios) that is hardly feasible. Rather I shall be sold up there, and then I shall not have a workshop at all!

It would not require so very much money to right this distinctly wrong situation: and you expressed yourself as willing, the other day, to take a hand in devising some way out for me. I have not many debts--the most urgent is my rent, above-mentioned. It is quite certain that a large show of all my things would not be unproductive, if properly handled by a dealer who gave himself a little trouble. Is it really out of the question for you, one of the few people who care for pictures in London, to do something to facilitate this? Whether (after six months of illness) I have a recuperative holiday, or whether I do not, weekly it costs me as much to live in London as it would in the country in France or Italy. So it is not only a question of 'a holiday.' I cannot realize any money at once on books because, as I told you, I am tied by agreements.

Now, since without anything to show for it you have given me seventy-five pounds (against which of

> course I shall as agreed part with any work of mine you care to have) it is obvious that you have behaved extremely handsomely, and it is no mere form of words when I say that I am very grateful for that help. But alas, that has been swallowed up in the expenses of an illness. That is the difficulty! Here I am, thanks to the help of a few friends, more or less settled with my illness: but unable to go ahead and produce, high and dry for lack of funds--because all the funds have been drawn on for an unreproductive spell of ill-health. [71]

The Apes of God is a portrayal of the world of art between the wars, but the exposed roots of the Lionel Kein chapter indicate that the story is told from a particular perspective. Lewis himself was adamant on this point. "My information upon these subjects," he wrote in the encyclical, "is quite first-hand" (Apes, 121/129). The artists under attack by the Lewis gun may have been in themselves too unimportant (as the early reviewers suggested) for the energetic attacks they were subject to, but they found unified prominence in Lewis's perception of them by virtue of one thing he saw them to have in common: what in The Apes of God he called their "ample means and leisure" (Apes, 119/127). None of them depended--as Lewis himself did--for their livelihood and freedom to carry on artistic endeavours on the financially-viable disposal of the work of their creative hands (neither the Schiffs nor the Sitwells nor the Wadsworths nor their friend Richard Wyndham).

c. Manifesto of the Novel

To see the "Chez Lionel Kein Esq." chapter of The Apes of God simply as an elaborate satirical portrait of the Sydney Schiffs and their circle is to overlook the elements that connect this eighty-two page segment with the rest of the book and to ignore the theoretical and political thrust of the core of this chapter: the discussion that occupies the Keins and Zagreus prior to the arrival of the other guests. The interchange of ideas between Zagreus and his hosts on pages 239/251 to 268/281 of the novel is perhaps imprecisely described as a discussion. Zagreus exchanges some casual words with the Keins, but his involvement in serious discourse is confined to his reciting the words of Pierpoint in the manner of a radio or telephone transmission:

> Speaking he did not look at Mrs. Kein but past her or through her. This gave the effect to this dialogue of a telephone-conversation. During a retort or interruption, Zagreus waited, as if unseen, and standing at the opening of a transmitter, for the voice to stop--an answer building itself up in his head, his lips already slightly moving. (Apes, 253-54/266)

In this part of the book, the "broadcast" replaces the encyclical as a literary device that allows Lewis to present directly to the reader the philosophical notions of Pierpoint unencumbered by the intrusive distraction of narrative commentary.

The broadcast is a distinct element within the text. It resists interference. In fact, whenever Zagreus attempts to add to or extrapolate from it, as he frequently does, its coherence breaks down.[72] By its singular presentation, it is preserved as an independent platform for Pierpointian commentary. As an extension of the encyclical, it functions in the novel somewhat in the manner of a technique of alienation, whereby Dan--the picaro--and the reader are rather abruptly reminded that they have been sent on this excursion through the territories of the apes of God for the purpose of observing from a specific perspective particular phenomena contributing to what Pierpoint calls "the present predicament of art" (Apes, 125/133). The independent status of the broadcast is in keeping with the words with which Pierpoint concludes the encyclical:

> I am not in agreement with the current belief in a strained 'impersonality' as the secret of artistic success. Nor can I see the sense of pretending--as it must be a pretence, and a thin one, too--that in my account to you of what I have seen I can be impartial and omniscient. That would be in the nature of a bluff or a blasphemy. There can only be one judge, and I am not he.
>
> I am not a judge but a party. All I can claim is that my cause is not an idle one--that I appeal less to passion than to reason. (Apes, 125/133)

A discussion of the nature and role of the broadcast raises the matter of the relationship between Pierpoint and Lewis and the question of to what degree the critical stance of the "invisible magnifico" (Apes, 607/[631]) tends to be a duplication of that of his creator. Pierpoint himself seems to speak to this issue when he refers, in the encyclical, to the "flourishing and bombastic rôle that you may sometimes see me in" (Apes, 125/133-34) (evidently a reference to the broadcast, which is not, incidentally, the exclusive province of Zagreus) and suggests that it is "a caricature of some constant figure in the audience [Lewis?], rather than what I am (in any sense) myself" (Apes, 125/134). In other words, Pierpoint is a Lewis-figure or at least "the Great Absentee" (Apes, 261/274) functions as a thinly-disguised authorial presence in the novel. As the author incognito, he is a parody both of Lewis and of the authors of the high-brow fiction of the time, the editors of the "dramatised social news-sheets" in which the "heroes of the story (or what used to be named in that way) . . . [are] (the novelist, his patrons and particular friends, those in favour with him, those with whom he is in favour)":

> At the head of that dazzling élite is usually some whimsical, half-apologetic, but very much sheltered and coddled projection of himself, the editor (that is the fictionist). (Apes, 262/275)

The Apes of God is like the "'Gossip'-book" (Apes, 262/275) novels Zagreus rails against in that it is "personal" (Apes, 259/272) fiction; it is different in that it admits to being personal: it does not pretend to approach its material with "the detachment of the chemist or of the surgeon" (Apes, 259/272). The question of the artist's detachment or objectivity or impartiality is the subject of Zagreus's first broadcast in the Lionel Kein chapter of The Apes of God, where it is brought to bear on the contemporary phenomenon of the roman à clef. The argument about "the 'impersonal' fallacy" would have struck a familiar note with those of Lewis's contemporaries who had read The Lion and the Fox where Lewis had written:

> It is actually as impossible (as it is undesirable) for an artist to be 'impersonal' as it is for a 'tree' to be neither an oak, nor a birch, nor a pine, nor any known tree, but the abstraction 'tree.'[73]

In the broadcast, Zagreus argues, briefly, that the writer of salon fiction, with his pretence of impersonality, his false air of detachment, has perverted or abandoned altogether the artist's role (which is to be the perceptive and intellectually alert spectator, the adversary of life) and has adopted the "Public Opinion of the salon" (Apes, 260/273) as the standard of conduct and judgement. Expressing Lewis's own interest in the ideational structure of a given work, Zagreus draws attention to the problems related to the confusion of art and life in the "private publicity-machinery" (Apes, 264/277) of the ruling society:

> 'It is precisely that truth--that any objective truth whatever--cannot exist in the midst of the hot and immediate interests of "real" everyday social life--the life of the Gossip-column, the fashionable studio, the freak-party. The purest *truth* cannot be used for the purposes of such a life. Used as a weapon only, it must lose its significance. The creation resulting from such a mixture must daily become more utilitarian. *The works of literature resulting can be nothing but weapons of the vanity*--day-dreams of the too-concrete personal self, of the Society-leader, the most eminent of Apes. Those works will be contrivances only, and too simply for the securing of 'power' (in the ordinary, vulgar, Nietzchean sense)--' (*Apes*, 266/279)

What concerns Lewis most of all about the intrusion of gossip into the world of serious art is not merely the falsified nature of the fiction of the salon, but the attendant inescapable political implications of gossip-column fiction, which Zagreus speaks of when he describes the salon as "'a place where the little can revenge themselves upon the great'" (*Apes*, 260/274). The salon, with its levelling influence, becomes, in Zagreus's discourse, "the stronghold of democracy, as democracy is understood with us" (*Apes*, 261/274-75), a metaphor for a democratic order, which is by its very nature an environment in which the hero--the individual--cannot survive. It is in this context that the subject of this broadcast is related to the thematic structure of the novel:

> 'Always in these books what could be called the "*Lion*"-*theme*--or the *anti-"Lion"-theme*--will be noticed recurring. It is a constant feature. For this is a jungle from which all Lions are banished--lest democratic susceptibilities he offended. And anyone who is noticed being kind to a "Lion"--much more any "Lion-hunter"--has pretty quick *snob* spat at him--that is, superlatively, a sport that is not allowed! For in the High Bohemia of the Ritzes and Rivieras are we not *all* "artists"--all "geniuses"--all "Lions". Was not the War fought to that end--to make the World safe for Democracy, and free of disturbing "Lions", for ever more? It is the Paradise of the Apes of God, we are to understand!' (*Apes*, 264/277)

The immediate narrative context indicates that the "lion" is employed (as it commonly was in Lewis's day) to denote "artist" or "genius." But the world under assessment here is a world in which the fine arts are, as Lewis has said elsewhere, "on their death-bed."[74] It is a "time without art . . . a period without art" (Apes, 294/308): the lion has been replaced by the ape. The title of the chapter, "Chez Lionel Kein Esq." can thus be interpreted as "At the house of no lion" ("Kein" being the German equivalent of "no" or "none"). The central character, a "non-lion," Lionel Kein, or "Li," as Zagreus often calls him, is, like all writers of "polite Fiction," deceptive, a li-ar: he resists truth. His novels are composed, Zagreus tells Dan, of "Li-ing self-portraiture" (Apes, 301/315). His country house is Falsehood Farm (presumably a take-off from the Schiffs' own Lye Green House). Furthermore, his last name suggests his identity with the herd:

> Zagreus pointed to the picture upon the wall above the piano. Dan approached it, his eyes solemnly riveted upon the opaque slices of drab pigment. It was cattle. (Apes, 240/253)

Indeed, his guests are referred to as a "herd" (Apes, 272/286) of "cattle" (Apes, 300/314). One of them, Keith of Ravelstone, has been especially well-equipped for his vocation: in his highland home, Zagreus says, he had spent his time "'tending . . . the shadowy, mist-wrapt kine (excellent training for subsequent attendance upon Lionel--)'" (Apes, 302/317).

Zagreus's broadcast is an analysis of the politics of art in an era of herd-dominance, an "epoch of the Massenmensch" (Apes, 261/274). He follows closely a central argument set forth in The Lion and the Fox, a critical work composed during the same period as The Apes of God and referred to by Lewis as "my first political book."[75] Here Lewis, in the context of a study of Shakespeare and a response to Shakespeare's critics, writes about what he calls the "herd-war against the head,"[76] the struggle between the lion (the artist, the individual, "the Person, the One")[77] and the fox ("the animal human average,"[78] the representative of the herd) as a struggle between the creative impulse and the power that is always present, lurking in the background, waiting for an opportunity to destroy the hero, the "really eminent."[79] Lewis contends, in The Lion and the Fox, that "the institutions of the primitive herd approximate to something that can be found, in however degenerate a form, in any herd at all."[80] The words of Zagreus's broadcast are related specifically to the theme of this book and could easily have glossed the pages of The Lion and the Fox:

> Society is a defensive organisation against the incalculable. It is so constituted as to exclude and to banish anything, or any person, likely to disturb its repose, to rout its pretences, wound its vanity, or to demand energy or a new effort, which it is determined not to make. (Apes, 261/274)

* * *

The material of Zagreus's arts-oriented discourse is broadened in the second part of the chapter, where Kalman, one of the guests, is subjected to Zagreus's second broadcast of the afternoon. The subject of Zagreus's talk is the nature and survival of "eminence" (which Kalman defines as "pride manifested by the object of a superstitious esteem" [Apes, 283/296]) in the context of an egalitarian order. Zagreus argues that the qualities that would traditionally have been associated with eminence are not possible in a democratic--or bolshevist, proletarian, communist (he uses all four terms)--society. Where herd-instincts are allowed to rule, everything having claim to eminence is attacked. A passage from The Lion and the Fox serves as a useful commentary on this issue:

> in the universal organized revolt against authority it is not only the head of a state or the head of a family--the king (on account of political privilege), the man (on account of sex privilege), the employer (on account of his monopoly of wealth)--but, with an ingenious thoroughness, every form of even the most modest eminence, that is attacked. Indeed the centre of attack is rapidly shifting from the really eminent (who are considered as already destroyed) to the petit bourgeois mass of the smally privileged. The revolutionary waves, again, have long extended the scope of their action, and have found fresh 'kings' or leaders in every province of life.[81]

This "universal king-hunt,"[82] as Lewis calls it in The Lion and the Fox, in which "anything representing the principle of individuality"[83] is attacked, is related to "a progressive collapse towards primitive conditions," which results in a kind of human "crowd-eminence" (Apes, 283/297), pride in nothing greater than the simple fact of being alive. The "'noble savage'" is successor of "the nobleman" (Apes, 284/298): all men are "'eminent'" under communism (Apes, 285/299), just as all men are artists, geniuses, lions, in the "organized pettiness" (Apes, 261/274) of "the catastropho-conservative" atmosphere of "the High Bohemia of the Ritzes and Rivieras" (Apes, 264/277).

* * *

In 1925 Lewis published an article in which he said:

> It is a danger signal always for our race when the fine arts become too real; when the cry of life is set up in the theatre. . . . Madness, for us, is to be

> _real_. The reality, without its veil of art, would be insupportable.[84]

The death of art, as Lewis saw it, has vast implications in a world that stretches far beyond the merely artistic. "AEsthetic expression is one of the traditional organs of civilised society,"[85] Lewis wrote, and when the fine arts cease to flourish, as they do when art comes over into life and the artist is found not on stage, but in the audience, this disintegration "is a great human event, and it should not be hushed up, for more than the private interest of the artist is involved."[86]

The interpenetration of the worlds of art and life is the subject and method of the Lionel Kein chapter of _The Apes of God_. The problems Zagreus outlines in his two broadcasts: the confusion of art and life in salon fiction (which includes, in a general way, the roman à clef), and the repression of the individual (the democratization of society and, specifically, the world of art: the communalization of eminence) are related in a way that makes the Lionel Kein chapter a kind of commentary--even manifesto--of the entire novel. The chapter not only portrays what Lewis called an "inferno of insipidity and decay," but provides its own rationale--through method and subject matter--for the very method (roman à clef) and subject matter (the decay of the arts as at once a paradigm for and a reflection of a ruined society) of _The Apes of God_.

The end of one social order in _The Apes of God_ is, as has been noted here, marked by the frenzied mechanistic rattle of death-the-drummer. It is not an arbitrary judgement to say that this extinction, the expiration that marks the end of the novel (and of an era) is hastened along by the figure of Lionel Kein who cymbals (Apes, 244/257) with his hands and speaks "with the full roulade and rattle of his most withering drawl--like snarling drums set rolling" (Apes, 246/259). He drawls "pitiful and nasal, with a senile titubation of the tongue, exploiting the death-rattle" (Apes, 249/261). These vocal emissions from his shallow jaws that clatter (Apes, 243/255) and click (Apes, 244/256) are consistently evocative of the apocalyptic percussion motif of the novel's beginning and end.

15. THE FINNIAN SHAWS

a. Composition

The composition of "Lord Osmund's Lenten Party," by far the longest and most complex section of The Apes of God (it is divided into twenty-two separate narrative units) must have extended--on and off--over the duration of the novel's creation. Among the clues to the date of completion of the manuscript is an extended allusion which indicates that one part of the "Lenten Party" at least was composed as late as the end of October or beginning of November 1929. The passage, which appears on pages 566/589-567/590 of the book, in the section entitled "The Library," is presented as a gloss on Lord Osmund's latest work. It consists, in fact, of a loose summary of a part of the action of Osbert Sitwell's novel, The Man Who Lost Himself, published on 24 October 1929.[1] Evidently Lewis, who had already sent a manuscript draft of the novel to Charles Prentice for consideration and had decided, upon receiving Prentice's response, to "bring out the first limited edition"[2] himself, could not resist adding to the novel this last-minute and minimally-disguised allusion to a subject which, as Blackshirt tells Dan, "is an ideal illustration" (Apes, 566/589) and confirmation of Pierpoint's diagnosis of "God's Peterpaniest family" (Apes, 499/520). Lewis's decision to write the passage could be the explanation for his 5 November 1929 statement (in a letter to Jessica Dismorr) that "The Apes will not be ready for a month."[3]

As early as September 1923[4] Lewis submitted to T. S. Eliot for inclusion in The Criterion the first of four separate fragments of The Apes of God, "Mr. Zagreus and the Split-Man." This submission was followed, in order, by segments entitled "The Apes of God" and

"Lord Osmund's Lenten Party" (March 1924) and, shortly afterwards, "Mrs. Farnham's tea-party." (The latter two did not appear in Eliot's magazine.) In a letter to Eliot that spring Lewis stated that "Lord Osmund's party is of considerable length; and as it will appear in the Criterion is only taken up to the arrival of Zagreus. As to the hosts surname, you will give me your best advice when we meet."[5] Lord Osmund, in the fragment submitted to Eliot, had been named Stillwell, obviously a variation of Sitwell. This name had won Lewis's favour over Sweetwells, an earlier choice, recorded among the Cornell archives. (No doubt Lewis found the connotative value of Stillwell to be more appropriate for his purpose.)[6] Lewis revealed in yet another letter regarding the fragments he had submitted that both he and Eliot remained uneasy about elements of the lenten party episode. He wrote, "In Lord Osmund's Lenten party the name Stillwell (if too suggestive of certain people) could be anything you like." He closed with a P.S., stating, "I even think that in any case another name, for the purposes of this extract, had better be given to Lord Osmund."[7]

Whether or not Lord Osmund Stillwell was thereupon renamed Finnian Shaw (the rhythm and last syllable presumably derived from Renishaw, the name of the Sitwell family seat in Derbyshire) Eliot refrained from using in The Criterion the lenten party tale. He did so even though the fragment--and the option to publish--remained in his hands until 30 January 1925.[8] Eliot's reason for holding back the lenten party fragment was undoubtedly the libellous nature of its characterization. If indeed the passage Lewis gave him consisted of the party up to Zagreus's arrival, there was more than enough material in it to allow the contemporary reader to identify Osbert Sitwell, "the famous Chelsea Star of 'Gossip'" (Apes, 349/366), and his retinue.

b. Sitwell Satires

It is difficult to judge what the immediate effects would have been had Eliot decided to publish the lenten party fragment in 1924. The second excerpt from the novel published in The Criterion, "The Apes of God," had already drawn a nervous written response from Osbert Sitwell, who felt threatened by Lewis's reference to a group of apes identified as "a family of great poets." His letter to Lewis is dated simply "Friday," but a reference to "your last contribution to the 'Cri'"[9] suggests very clearly the 1924 date. Sitwell seems to have felt rather urgently his need to discuss with Lewis the latter's imminent attack on his family, for he began his letter with the statement: "I have been to see you several times, but can't catch you."[10] In a tone of impatience and importunity, mixed with self-indulgent humour, Sitwell continued:

> Don't get onto a frail biographical truck too much in your new book, as it would be extremely tiresome--and make us either self-conscious or quarrelous.
>
> I have always admired your writings (and paintings) enormously; and of course cannot help seeing that your last contribution to the 'Cri' was a very good one.
>
> But in your attack on us apes, my dear God, you have put yourself in bad company. All the gutter-grub writers have been engaged for months past on it--nobly backed by W. Noel Coward. And that is not the sort of company one would choose for you.
>
> Also, some of my Simian family happen to have written rather good books--a fact you ignore. Perhaps, though, I am developing Persecution Mania?[11]

Evidently Lewis attempted to put the man at ease about his concern, for in another letter (which contains a rather clever allusion to Sydney Schiff, recognizable as the "pseudo-Proust" in the same passage in The Criterion and hence the Sitwells' brother-in-distress) Osbert Sitwell agreed to put the matter to rest:

> Thank you for your letter. I must try not to be such a sensitive fellow, but thought it better to mention than hoard up a secret grievance, whether imaginary or substantial. One has, so to speak, to schifft for oneself.[12]

Osbert Sitwell's letter, written in response to the implied threat directed at his family in The Criterion in 1924 was not without substantial context and reason. In mentioning to Lewis Noel Coward and other "gutter-grub writers" who had been attacking his family "for months past," he referred to the first of a series of caricatures of various members of the Sitwell family which had begun to appear on the literary scene (and would continue to do so, more or less at annual intervals, for several years to come). Not only the three Sitwell children, but their parents as well, had been recent subjects of literary caricature. In Huxley's Crome Yellow (1921), for example, Priscilla Wimbush, considered by many as having been derived from Ottoline Morrell, had, as John Pearson points out in his recent biography of the Sitwells, some "un-Ottoline-like" traits that caused her to be identified with Lady Ida Sitwell: most notably, her gambling and bankruptcy.[13] (Eliot, as has been noted elsewhere in this thesis, identified Mrs. Wimbush in the margins of his own copy of Crome Yellow as Lady Ida Sitwell.) In the same novel Sir George, as Henry Wimbush, suffered the public caricature of his eccentricities and obsessions related to architecture and family history.

Crome Yellow was followed in 1922 by a caricature of Osbert Sitwell as Lord Badgery in Huxley's short story, "The Tillotson Banquet." (It was in retaliation for this, according to Pearson, that Sitwell wrote his first short story: "The Machine Breaks Down," where Huxley appears as a character called Erasmus.)

Crome Yellow in 1921 and "The Tillotson Banquet" in 1922 were followed by Noel Coward's London Calling (a review produced at the Duke of York's theatre in September 1923). In it was a sketch inspired by the Sitwells' own Façade (1922), entitled "The Swiss Family Whittlebot," a scene in which a poetess named Hernia Whittlebot recites her poems along with her two brothers, Gob and Sago.[14]

It was in the context of these recent literary attacks that Osbert Sitwell responded to "The Apes of God" excerpt and that Lewis wrote about the Sitwells at all. Indeed, by the time The Apes of God was published as a completed novel, the Sitwells had suffered still more by the pens of their contemporaries. In 1924 there was Smaragda's Lover--a Dramatic Phantasmagoria by W. J. Turner. Its publication prompted Osbert to suggest to his publisher, Grant Richards, that newspaper advertisements of his latest book might be accompanied by a note stating that the Sitwells "seem to afford almost as many ideas to other authors as we do to ourselves."[15] In Turner's rather undistinguished play, Osbert appears as Sylvester Snodgrass, a candidate for the Poet Laureateship. He and his brother Sebastian have an eccentric and disgustingly mean father, Sir Simon, who "is always quarrelling with them. . . .[H]e hates everything that they admire and hardly gives them a penny. He lives entirely in the past"[16] and collects works of art for "Castel Pontemillia"--his "Italian place."[17]

The brothers call him by his nickname, St. Vitus, and Sebastian makes him the butt of humour, describing him as a half-witted family sieve: "brains slipped through all right, but the money stuck."[18] The play includes a parody performance of Façade, here called "The Grand Parade."

During 1926 the Sitwells were assailed directly in the writings of a man Osbert referred to as "our most virulent enemy,"[19] Mr. X. This was, in fact, C. K. Scott Moncrieff, who wrote several articles about the Sitwells for a periodical entitled New Witness. His offence, as described by Osbert in "A Few Days in an Author's Life" was one of metaphorical "body-snatching":[20] "he broke into my family vault," Sitwell wrote, and "desecrated the tombs of my ancestors, publishing his gruesome thefts in that long series of grisly articles which ensued."[21]

The onslaught still did not stop. In the year 1928 the third version of D. H. Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's Lover was published. It contained, as Pearson points out, various allusions to the Sitwells and a portrait (in Clifford Chatterley, one of three children in an unhappy aristocratic family) drawn to a large extent from Osbert Sitwell. Referring to three versions of Lawrence's novel (1944, 1972, 1928), Pearson argues convincingly that the Sitwells--Osbert especially--"during the crisis of his middle thirties"[22]--were a major inspiration for some of the characters.[23] He suggests that Lawrence, in the novel, provides his own analysis of what Lewis in the next and possibly most overwhelming attack on the Sitwells calls the "many painfully personal utterances of Lord Osmund Finnian Shaw, in his rôle of author" (Apes, 567/590). Lawrence had written:

> Still he was ambitious. He had taken to writing stories; curious, very personal, stories about people he had known. Clever, rather spiteful, and yet, in some mysterious way, meaningless. The observation was extraordinary and peculiar. But there was no touch, no actual contact. It was as if the whole thing took place in a vacuum. And since the field of life is largely an artificially-lighted stage to-day, the stories were curiously true to modern life, to the modern psychology, that is.
>
> Clifford was almost morbidly sensitive about these stories. He wanted everyone to think them good, of the best, ne plus ultra. They appeared in the most modern magazines, and were praised and blamed as usual. But to Clifford the blame was torture, like knives goading him. It was as if the whole of his being were in his stories.[24]

Lewis, when he has Zagreus explain to Dan that in Lord Osmund Finnian Shaw's books the hero is in every case Osmund himself, is less gentle than Lawrence. It is, he says, "nothing but the most trivial personal motives that cause him, as a society-lion, ever to write a book" (Apes, 563/586):

> Osmund's heroes always have valets because Osmund has a valet. They all have a tendency to corpulence. There is nothing they have, Osmund has not got, or is supposed to have got--in fact they possess many things O. is only supposed to have. Daydreams of his mind you see--the naive personalities of this gilded riff-raff are advertised like a soap or sewing machine. (Apes, 566/589)

The Apes of God was not the last literary attack on the Sitwells. Indeed, another distinct blow came in 1934 from the original of another of the characters in that novel: Robert Nichols, the poet whose readings on the B.B.C. are given as the real reason for Mrs. Bosun's fit in the time-worn Finnian Shaw charade referred to as Bosun:

> When Mrs. Bosun, you observed, was picked up beside the loud-speaker—you heard all that?--what was it that had overcome Mrs. Bosun--such was the burning question of the moment. What deadly sounds had been coming out

> of the loud-speaker as Phoebus entered the room! You heard the sequel--when at last the laugh came, at the name Robert. Their friend so-named was broadcasting a poem tonight--had you studied the B.B.C. programme beforehand, and so been aware of that fact, you would certainly have foreseen what would have been supposed to be coming out of the mouth of the loud-speaker, when Mrs. Bosun was supposed to have been taken ill, and Phoebus was supposed to have gone in. It is a typical pantomime. As performed by these strange adult children of anything from thirty to fifty, you have a fair specimen in this farce called Bosun. Robert Wright is a well-worn London laughing-stock, of ten years' standing--before that he was laughed at all through the world-war, on account of his pronounced gallantry-in-action and constant attempts upon the laurel of the war-poet, in competition with Brooke: there was a time when you only had to say Robert and everyone would hang out a bright smile to welcome what was to come. So much for the world's fool Robert--the Public however understand he is a poet--ten million spell-bound subscribers or some of them listen to the truly gloomy verses of Robert we will assume. So when at last the cat was out of the bag as you saw, and the cat turned out to be Robert, that was an instant success. Mrs. Bosun, joke number one, had been knocked out by Robert, joke number two. (Apes, 392/409-10)

Nichols, as Lewis indicates, had enjoyed a brief period of popularity as a war-poet just after the death of everyone's hero, Rupert Brooke. Before the war ended, Edith Sitwell had taken particular interest in him, as her letters indicate. But even at the height of his fame Nichols's manner and conduct had been the source of derisive amusement, as indicated in some letters by Aldous Huxley (whose family were friends of Nichols's) to his father and brother Julian, to whom he described Nichols's behaviour at a poetry reading in 1917: Nichols "raved and screamed and hooted and moaned his filthy war poems," Huxley wrote, "like a Lyceum Villain who hasn't learned how to act."[25]

Edith Sitwell's and the public's infatuation with Nichols lasted only a short time. His fall from favour, which Lewis refers to in the passage from "Lord Osmund's Lenten Party," was aggravated by the fact that he received rough treatment as the butt of Sitwell humour. His retaliation took the form of a poem in five books of rhyming couplets meant to expose and ridicule Osbert Sitwell ("Fisbo"),[26] whose reputation as a literary artist had eclipsed his own:

> Ah, Fisbo, Fisbo—know the time has been
> When I, too, longed to enter on that scene
> With something of a flourish, to be known
> For what I am: a poet. And I own
> I think I have a deal more right than you
> To any pennyworth of laurel due.[27]

Nichols's book of verse, like so many of the livres à clef of the time, was awaited with eager curiosity by those who knew of its imminent publication. Roy Campbell, for example, whose own poème à clef, The Georgiad (1931), had brought him endless mirth,[28] upon hearing of Nichols's plan for a 3000 line satiric poem, wrote to Lewis, stating that his own Georgiad had inspired about fifty "squibs" and that he expected that the protagonist of Nichols's poem might be he. A statement in his letter describes neatly the world into which The Apes of God was cast: there seems, he said, to be "quite an epidemic of satire."[29]

c. Favourite Enemies

> For some months now, at regularly recurring intervals, Mr. Wyndham Lewis has been attacking me in the pages of the Daily Mail—under my own name and under a pseudonym which it is impossible not to associate with me. In the past, I have admired Mr. Lewis' articles . . . because he seemed to me to be one of the few people who succeeded in being witty without being offensive. He was often exceedingly funny at my expense, and nobody laughed more than I did. For the last few months however, there has been a change in the nature of his articles, and I am not alone in thinking that

> they are nearing (indeed have become) offensive without being amusing. 30

It is evident that before 1924 and, certainly, prior to the publication of The Apes of God in 1930, the Sitwell family had become favourite objects of satire. Their numerous appearances as major characters in various romans à clef were undoubtedly related to the fact that, apart from their literary talents and activities, they tended to have an unfailing appeal to the writers of gossip-columns. The question of whether their place, as F. R. Leavis said, was indeed in the "history of publicity rather than of poetry"[31] was a central one for some contemporary men of letters who watched as the Sitwells took advantage of the public's interest in their personal activities to define and shape the public's perception of the post-war literary artist. "They are everybody's highbrow artists," declared Geoffrey Grigson, who won himself a place alongside Lewis as one of Edith Sitwell's confirmed enemies. Grigson accused these aristocratic poets of "cartooning themselves for the mob as the 'queer men' of poetry" even though they had, he stated, "written nothing worth a wise man's attention for five minutes."[32]

Although a critic like Grigson felt justified, in the early 1930s, in expressing an opinion that was so dogmatically anti-Sitwell, his views, while being heartily attested to by some, were far from being universally upheld. When The Apes of God was published, for example, Lewis, as its author, sustained the reaction of many others who, unlike Grigson and himself, extolled the merits of the Sitwells as artists and as people. Not least noteworthy among these was W. B. Yeats, who in a letter written to Lewis shortly after The Apes of God appeared expressed concern over the fact that Lewis, in the novel, had satirized Edith Sitwell.[33] Yeats was not alone in coming to the defence of the Sitwells; Naomi Mitchison also wrote in protest of what she perceived as their unfair victimization. Her statement, published in Time and Tide, like Yeats's letter, was reprinted in Lewis's Satire & Fiction:

> As to the Sitwells: eleven years ago one of them was very kind to me. He didn't know who I was; and I've scarcely seen them since then, nor do I know anything about their private affairs, but because of that kindness . . . I feel impelled to say that I think Wyndham Lewis has behaved pretty badly about them, and artistically it has spoiled an important section of his book.[34]

Lewis did respond, in Satire & Fiction, to these insinuations that the Finnian Shaws were directly related to the Sitwells. His comments seem, however, to have been intended simply as an extension of the fun-and-games aspect of Satire & Fiction rather than as a deliberate protective measure in the context of a possible libel suit.[35] He used Frank Swinnerton's comment (in The Evening News) that the portraits in The Apes of God were "portraits, for the most part, of those whom I do not know"[36] to create a defence for himself against accusations that the Sitwells had been maligned by him. In Satire & Fiction Lewis wrote:

> AN ALIBI!
> With The Apes of God, as with most works of satire, the identification of characters in the book with living persons has occupied a good many people's attention. All I need say is this: In the Evening News Mr. Swinnerton says the Apes of God are people that he 'does not know'--that he would have preferred the 'identification' to have been 'less mysterious' etc. But the only occasion upon which I have met Mr. Swinnerton was at dinner at the house of Captain Osbert Sitwell. This would certainly seem to contradict what is said in Time and Tide [reference to Naomi Mitchison's comment]. Either the latter is

> mistaken, or Mr. Swinnerton is affecting ignorance. So Mr. Swinnerton's statement will serve as a sort of alibi![37]

If this disclaimer seems rather casual and almost comic, it simply serves to underline the tone of practical joking, the manner of "catch me if you can" which seemed to play a significant role in the protracted literary feud between the Sitwells and Lewis. This is not to say, however, that the Finnian Shaws did not arouse some degree of rancour among members of the Sitwell family when they first felt the sting of Lewis's satiric barbs. The residue of bitterness, felt even decades later, is most readily demonstrated in the reflections of Sacheverell Sitwell, who in an interview given to a writer for The Guardian only a few years ago, remarked philosophically about The Apes of God. "That was a time-bomb meant to kill us," he said. It "failed to go off," he added, "because it bored everybody."[38] In a letter to the present writer in the same year, Sacheverell once more used the metaphor of the time bomb, stating that The Apes of God was intended to "mangle and destroy my family," and that its conspicuous failure to do so served to embitter Lewis, "an extremely talented and brilliant person," but a "'genius manque,'" who demonstrated "all the qualities and all the failings of his kind."[39]

The tone of Sacheverell Sitwell's comments is not consistent with the recollections of Lewis and the two elder Sitwell siblings. In 1954 Lewis, writing retrospectively about The Apes of God, stated that in rereading the book, it was the "lightheartedness which, more than anything else," impressed him.[40] In Blasting & Bombardiering he spoke of the Sitwells as one of his "comic turns."[41] Of Edith Sitwell, specifically, he wrote: "We are two good old enemies, Edith and I, inseparables in fact. I do not think I should be exaggerating if I described myself as Miss Sitwell's favourite enemy."[42] As for Edith herself, in a letter to her friend Veronica Gilliat in December 1932, she wrote: "when I feel cross, which is often, I tease Wyndham Lewis. Osbert and I tease him without stopping."[43] Edith was not alone among the members of her family to seek amusement occasionally by the taunting of Lewis. Osbert, in Tales My Father Taught Me (1962), writes of a few "techniques that I had devised for the harrying of Percy Wyndham Lewis."[44] The lively wit with which he describes his elaborate schemes for teasing his victim is surpassed, it seems, only by the obvious relish which be brought to the activities themselves. He describes, for example, finding in a box of old photographs at Renishaw a picture of two men "sitting side by side, both dressed in the same way and looking exactly alike":

> They were wearing black felt hats drawn down over their eyes and enveloping black cloaks, very mysterious; but what captivated me was that they were both the very image of Wyndham Lewis. My mother was the only person who might be able to identify them. I went to find her. She looked at them and said:
>
> 'Of course, they are the Masked Musicians.'
>
> This was tantalizing because she could tell me no more. The photograph must have been very nearly forty years old. . . . I acted at once and ordered five hundred picture postcards to be reproduced from it, and when they arrived I sent a large number of them to Wyndham Lewis's particular friends and particular enemies: but the first card of all I posted was addressed to Wyndham Lewis himself at his studio with written on it anonymously the intimidating message: 'So there are two of you!'. . .
>
> Puzzled and alarmed, he went round to see various friends and found them with the same photograph, placed in a conspicuous position on the mantelpiece, but everyone was equally unable to explain the meaning.

> I will now tell the reader how the idea of the second method came to me as the happy result of a fortunate concatenation of circumstances. . . . One morning I came downstairs and said to my secretary, who was always most co-operative: 'I feel just in the mood to send Wyndham Lewis an unsolicited gift. . . . I wonder what we could find for him today.'
>
> She replied: 'I've the very thing for him in an envelope in my bag. It's a tooth, extracted by the dentist yesterday. . . . Here it is!' and she triumphantly produced on the palm of her hand an opalescent molar.
>
> I at once accepted the kind offer: first I wrapped the precious object in cotton wool and next placed it in a cardboard box, which had contained a watch, was of a pale shade of lilac, and bore on the lid in gold lettering the famous name of Cartier. I then added a card that I found lying on my desk, and which bore engraved on it the legend: With Sir Gerald du Maurier's Compliments. (It must have reached me, I think, accompanying an appeal for some charity connected with the stage, and affords another instance of the folly of throwing anything away--you can never tell when the most improbable article may come in useful.) The whole surprise packet, after it had been wound in layer after layer of rustling tissue paper, was then encased in sober brown paper, on which was pasted securely a label bearing Wyndham Lewis's name and address in typescript. Finally, when all this had been accomplished, it was posted to him from the G.P.O.[45]

In 1934 Edith Sitwell published an essay satirizing, among others, Geoffrey Grigson and Wyndham Lewis. ("Mr. Lewis longs for his friends to love him, he longs to be understood. Oh, will not somebody be kind?")[46] Propelled by the effect of her attack ("Lewis is absolutely howling with rage," she wrote to one friend in January 1935;[47] Lewis and Grigson have "howled themselves hoarse,"[48] she wrote to another in March), she decided to go for these two favourites among her enemies once more, "in a pamphlet, which is to be called The May Queen."[49] The May Queen never appeared, but Sitwell's interest in irritating Lewis as a diversion did not appear to subside over the years. In fact, Edith anticipated with great enthusiasm the inevitable dramatic excitement of further social or literary encounters with him. In September 1942 she wrote to Denton Welch, stating:

> Our one sadness is that Mr. P. Wyndham Lewis is absent from England. We are determined that when he returns, you _must_ be asked to write a reminiscence of a meeting with him.[50]

Over a year later, in December 1943, still awaiting Lewis's return from North America, she wrote to Welch again:

> Osbert and I are really insistent that you should meet Wyndham Lewis. When and if he returns to England. We want a record of the meeting. . . .[51]

In 1959 Edith Sitwell wrote summarily in a letter of her long-standing public enmity with Lewis; by the very matter-of-factness of her tone she placed into perspective the literary dimensions of the feud which had neither begun nor ended with, but seemed to be defined by, _The Apes of God_. "I figured as Lady Harriet in his _The Apes of God_," she wrote simply to her friend Lady Snow. "(And he figured as Mr Henry Debringham [Debingham] in the only novel I have ever written.)"[52]

That Lewis and _The Apes of God_ continued to play a significant role in Edith Sitwell's consciousness even decades after the novel appeared is demonstrated by the fact that she planned to publish further, as an enticing pre-publication prelude to her autobiography, _Taken Care Of_ (1965), a memoir of Lewis entitled "The Ape God or 'Next to Godliness.'"

> Since the publication of a very long work, which we can only describe as fiction, a work called "The Apes of God", parts of which have, so I am told, have been read by one person or another, I have been asked by both of these people to say exactly how well I knew Mr. Percy Wyndham Lewis in the past. This chapter, therefore, shall forerun my memoirs, on which I am now engaged and which will appear shortly.

> And I will begin by saying that whilst I knew Mr. Lewis very well, he, to whom I sat for nearly a year, did not know me at all.[53]

The article never appeared, but some portions of it were expanded and later incorporated into a section of the autobiography itself. "The Missing Collar," as Sitwell's reminiscence was called, became the eleventh chapter of *Taken Care Of*, but the fact that Lewis was perhaps the most prominent figure in her mind when Sitwell wrote about those people who had shaped her life is confirmed by her having intended, initially, to place her story about him at the beginning of the book. A manuscript draft of "The Missing Collar" begins:

> *Preface*
>
> This short book consists of portraits, some of people to whom I have given, and from whom I have received, much devotion, others of people who, for one reason or another, have tried my patience. Amongst the latter, was the late Mr. Percy Wyndham Lewis, and I must admit that although I did not enjoy my meetings with him, I did enjoy writing my reminiscences of him, and it is with my portrait of him that I will begin my book.[54]

In the portion of her memoir of Lewis that finally made its way into *Taken Care Of* Edith Sitwell borrowed extensively from *Aspects of Modern Poetry* (1934) and from lines she had composed to caricature Lewis's appearance, gestures, and personality in her novel of almost twenty years before, *I Live Under a Black Sun* (1937).[55] The manner of her borrowing from earlier works can be easily seen:

> Mr. Debingham was alone when he received Becky's letter, a sitter having just left the studio. This was situated in a piece of waste ground haunted by pallid hens, squawking desolately and prophetically; and the appearance of Mr. Debingham's hair aroused in some observers the conviction that the feathers of these had sought within its

> His studio was situated in a piece of waste ground, off Kensington High Street, and haunted by pallid hens, squawking desolately and prophetically; and the appearance of Mr. Lewis's hair aroused in some observers the conviction that the feathers of these had sought within its shades a refuge from the general confusion. Another school of

shades a safe refuge from the general confusion. Another school of thought, however, ascribed the alien substances by which it appeared to be bestrewn to a different cause, believing them to be a sprinkling of the snows of Time. For the nature of his toilette, and his general appearance, undoubtedly aroused attention and gave rise to speculation. His complexion, always dark, was at moments darker than others; and this phenomenon was due to no freak of nature or change in pigmentation, but to habits and chance. His clothes seemed as much a refuge as a covering, and when fully equipped to face the world and the weather, he presented much the same appearance as that which we are privileged to see in photographs taken of certain brave men at the very moment of their rescue after six months spent among the Polar Wastes and the blubber.

. . . .

He grinned. And as he grinned, his personality underwent a lightning change. It was as if you had been looking at a lantern-slide. . . . A click, a fade-out, and another slide totally unconnected with it, and equally unreal, had taken its place. He was no longer the simple-minded artist, sunk in an abstruse meditation (a role in which he had appeared in his sitter's presence), but a rather sinister, piratic, formidable Dago. For this remarkable man, who was a sculptor in those moments which he could spare from thinking about himself, and from making plans to confute his enemies, had a habit of appearing in various roles, partly as a disguise (for caution was part of his professional equipment),

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His complexion, always dark, was at moments darker than others; and this pigmentation was due to no freak of Nature or chance, but to habits and choice. His clothes seemed as much a refuge as a covering, and when fully equipped to face the world and the weather, he presented much the same appearance as that which we are privileged to see in photographs of certain brave men at the very moment of their rescue after six months spent among the Polar wastes and the blubber.

His outward personality, his shield against the world, changed from day to day--one might almost say from hour to hour. When he grinned, one felt as if one were looking at a lantern slide . . . a click, a fade-out, and another slide, totally unconnected with it, and equally unreal, had taken its place. He was no longer the simple-minded artist, but a rather sinister, piratic, formidable Dago. For this remarkable man had a habit of appearing in various roles, partly as a disguise (for caution was part of his professional equipment) and partly in order to defy his own loneliness. For in this way so many different characters inhabited his studio (all enclosed in his own body, so that they had no opportunity of contradicting him or paying him insufficient attention and homage) that he had scarcely any need of outside companionship. He had to appear in different roles in order to impress himself, and, if possible, and partly in order to defy his own loneliness. For in this way, so many different characters inhabited his studio (all enclosed in his body, so that they had no opportunity of contradicting him or paying him insufficient attention and homage), that he had scarcely any need of outside companionship. Actually he was nothing but a great blundering, blubbering Big Boy, craving for Home and Mother; but he had to appear in different characters for the reasons already stated, and, also, in order to impress himself and, if possible, others.

There was the Spanish role, for instance, in which he would assume a gay manner, very masculine and gallant, and deeply impressive to a feminine observer. When appearing in this character he would wear a sombrero, would, from time to time, allow the exclamation 'Carramba!' to escape him, and would build castles in the air (or prisons for the objects of his affections) with square blockish movements of his thick meat-coloured hands. (Foreigners gesticulate.) Then, when, as was invariably the case, the castles in the air and the prisons did not materialise, he would abolish them again with a single stroke. He would too, when out of doors, draw his stick along the railings, with what he hoped was a flash of teeth. But always, just as the teeth were about to flash, the sun went in, so that the phenomenon was not discernible, or his bootlaces came undone and he was forced to do them up, so that the people on the top of the passing omnibus, who had been intended to witness and to admire the flash, could not see it. His life was full of little disappointments of this kind. [56]

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Then, when, as was invariably the case, the castles in the air and the prisons did not materialize, he would abolish them again with a single stroke. He would, too, when out of doors, draw his stick along the railings, with what he hoped was a flash of teeth. But always, just as the teeth were about to flash, the sun went in, so that the phenomenon was not observable, or his shoe-laces came undone and he was forced to do them up, so that the people on the top of the passing omnibus who had been intended to witness and to admire the flash, could not see it. His life was full of little disappointments of this kind. [57]

The effect of her borrowing from these sources is that Lewis is presented in caricature and so the reminiscence becomes simply another episode in the pattern of gossip-column fiction. Even here, eight years after Lewis's death, the sensational public squabble is kept to the fore. The world of the roman à clef--the atmosphere and mode of Gossip--prevails. In the "Preface" to Taken Care Of, written shortly before Sitwell's death in December 1964, she wrote that "provoked beyond endurance . . . I have given Mr. Percy Wyndham Lewis . . . some sharp slaps." But, she reminds her reader, "I have attacked nobody, unless they first attacked me."[58]

d. Family Friends

> Much of his satire has the effect of a literary cartoon, exaggerating the most pronounced characteristics of his subjects and vividly identifying them with the trait that has been disproportionately emphasised. . . . Because the portraits were recognizable the joke was all the funnier for those in the know and the humiliation all the more bitter for those pilloried. [59]

In a holograph draft of her memoir of Wyndham Lewis, Edith Sitwell wrote that in 1921 "and for some time after, [Lewis] rarely absented himself from the company of myself and my brothers for more than a few days at a time, being constantly at my brothers' house in Swan Walk, Chelsea, and at my flat in Bayswater."[60] Through his frequent social encounters with the Sitwells in the early years of the decade Lewis became familiar not only with the family itself, but with some of the more regular frequenters of the Sitwell households. These included, for example, the real-life models for the mad poet Kanute; the nineties harpy, Sib; the three mysterious interlopers at

Lord Osmund's lenten party; and others.

Kanute was in actuality Haraldur Hamur, an Icelandic poet and playwright whom Sacheverell Sitwell described, in a January 1918 letter to Lewis, as having been "led off home" after an evening's entertainment at Swan Walk.[61] He was, as Pearson points out, a member of a circle of young poets who sought out the Sitwell brothers just as the war came to an end, and came to regard them "as poetic equals and potential patrons."[62] Peter Quennell, himself a frequenter of the Sitwell residences in those years, relates in The Sign of the Fish (1957) the details of an encounter with Hamur on his first visit to Edith Sitwell's flat. The poetess answered the door, Quennell states:

> and murmured warningly, before we advanced, that there was a madman in the room beyond. . . . On the end of a small sofa crouched a haggard foreign poet--the demented Northern bard, nicknamed 'The Icelander', already portrayed by Osbert Sitwell in a volume of his five-fold autobiography--describing the horrible and fantastic visions that pursued him when he walked abroad.[63]

Haraldur Hamur's hallucinatory visions--which Osbert Sitwell describes in Queen Mary and Others (1974)--are integrated into the satiric portrait in The Apes of God. "'He has the most extraordinary delusions,'" Lord Phoebus explains:

> He believes that his spirit is a pigeon. He is afraid to open his mouth for fear it should fly away. . . .
> . . . .
> He has not slept for four nights. He dare not sleep for fear the pigeon should escape. It's a Trinity Complex. (Apes, 366/382)[64]

At the end of "Lord Osmund's Lenten Party" it becomes apparent that Kanute is not only a mad poet, but also one of the family's most entertaining side-shows. It is he who is the Bonassus, a gift from Cockeye and a plague on the Finnian Shaw children. At one point in the novel this "strangely-painted half-naked man" with "enormous red asses' ears" (Apes, 460/480) is chased around the grounds by his flushed and reluctant guardian, Lord Phoebus. It was this figure who became one of the most amusing elements of Lewis's Sitwell lampoon for Richard Aldington, who remarked in 1951, in a letter to Alan Bird, that the Bonassus may have been an allusion to a mediaeval Tarasque legend about a creature related to Leviathan, named Bonacho or Bonachum, a creature who harassed and subdued its persecutors by directing a stream of feces throughout the area they occupied.[65] If, indeed, Aldington's assessment regarding Lewis's source is correct (and one need only read the allusive description of Zagreus's magician's robes to convince oneself that even mediaeval Tarasque legends could easily have been within the scope of Lewis's reading brought to bear on The Apes of God), then a new level of comedy related to the Bonassus and its actor, Kanute, is made accessible. Kanute, "a figure of crapulous saga" with "a voice for an apocalypse" (Apes, 356/372) (the Bonassus' "sub-human roar" [Apes, 460/480]?) provides an added layer of humour as a vehicle of comic commentary on the jest which is "Lord Osmund's Lenten Party":

> he it was, if any one, who was the recognised Soggetto. He was the factor of scandal, required for the occasion: his rôle was to provide that thrilling element--to be the iron jelloid of the languid jest, to be the live wire amid Weary Willies. (Apes, 356/372)

* * *

In July 1930 Harold Acton (himself identified by Reitlinger as Harold Pope, the eager young aesthete who appeals enthusiastically to the Finnian Shaws to perform "The Gil-hooter" sketch in part XIV ["The Wicked Giant 'Cockeye'"] of "Lord Osmund's Lenten Party") received a letter from Reggie Turner, which said:

> The Sphinx keeps writing to me about Wyndham Lewis's The Apes of God and I have read one or two reviews of it by which I judge it is a disagreeable book. What do you think of it? The Sphinx is pleased, I can see, not unnaturally, because she is in it. . . .[66]

Violet Wyndham, the author of the book in which this letter is published, was Ada Leverson's daughter and hence the niece of Violet Schiff. (She was also the step-mother of Richard Wyndham.) She was possibly the model for Violet Ashmele in The Apes of God, the young shiny-faced niece of Isabel Kein who attempts to engage Dan Boleyn in a conversation about biochemistry: "'Is it something to do with life?'" (Apes, 274/287) she asks. "'I used to enjoy stinks at school more than anything else,'" (Apes, 274/288) she confides. Ms. Wyndham provides an editorial gloss on the Turner/Acton letter, stating:

> Most of the originals of the characters in Wyndham Lewis' novel were indignant at their representation. The Sphinx was wise enough not to take it literally and was merely amused, though also a little startled.[67]

Ada Leverson, as the Sib, figures prominently at the lenten party, where she appears as "a lady veiled and muffled," Lord Osmund's "reigning pet" (Apes, 353/369). The Sphinx, as Leverson had been nicknamed by Oscar Wilde, was a devoted friend of Osbert Sitwell, whom she first met at the home of her sister, Violet Schiff, in 1920. Her appearance in these, her later years, was distinctive. "She usually wore," Sitwell recalls in a chapter entitled "Ada Leverson" in Noble Essences (1950), "a flowing black cloak, and a black hat with a rather wide brim, shading well her eyes."[68] Peter Quennell in The

Sign of the Fish remembers seeing her at Edith Sitwell's home, perched at the opposite end of a sofa from the demented bard, Iceland, "entirely clothed in black velvet, and visibly quivering with alarm beneath a wide black picture-hat."[69] Quennell further observes:

> I often visited Miss Sitwell's receptions, and usually found the Sphinx attending, always dressed in the same style . . . and, although considerably less perturbed, seated on the same sofa. Many other visitors had climbed the stairs, including some celebrated and gifted persons--Wyndham Lewis, for example, stationed moody and pallid beside the window--[70]

Harold Acton remembers her in Memoirs of an Aesthete (1948) as "a torso under a large low hat, muffled up to the neck in a cloak."[71] In The Apes of God she appears as a "veiled and muffled" (Apes, 353/369) lady who belongs "to a distant generation" and supplies Lord Osmund with:

> tit-bits of Gossip arranged with his favourite sauces, the old yellow sauces of the Naughty Nineties . . . recipes she had learnt in a former age from the lips of the great men of that wicked, perverse, most clever epoch--from Wildes, Beardsleys and Whistlers. (Apes, 353/369-70)

Violet Wyndham describes how her mother, a "small figure . . . dressed in black" would wait for friends like Osbert Sitwell in her lounge, always "ready to discuss the latest gossip and news of the literary, social, theatrical and artistic worlds."[72] The Sib in The Apes of God, like the Sphinx herself, was almost deaf, yet enjoyed conversation above all. At the lenten party she is seen most often "communicating from afar off among the black Beardsley glades" and "pirouetting amid the Fêtes Galantes of the Naughty Nineties" (Apes, 361/378) in response to Lord Osmund's pleas for always more idle chatter:

> Purring a trifle piggishly, and savouring the ridiculous in his prominent snout (from which came a sardonic note) he settled down gluttonously to gossip.
>
> 'Tell us, Sib, about So-and-so!'
>
> 'What did So-and-so say to you, Sib, when--?'
>
> 'Tell them the story, Sib, of how you met So-and-so, yesterday--_I thought you bought it, but I find_--! You know Sib--do tell them that! No one has heard it, I am positive!'
>
> He pleaded, condescendingly down his nose--exciting with the colossal snobbery of his baying drawl his muffled aged soothsayer, come all the way from that far land of the Nineties. He wheedled his old Nineties-nurse for a further slice of victorian cat's-meat.
>
> 'Sib! Sib! Was So-and-so seen smelling Belvedere's hand, while Poor Tom was being sick--that was perfect you _must_ tell them that--you must! Do tell us again I have forgotten how it goes! That was a divine story Sib!'
>
> There were a thousand and one gems of café-chatter, of tit-for-tattle--of score-offs and well-rubbed-ins. (_Apes_, 354/370)

The Sib, presented in _The Apes of God_ as a "living period-piece in crazy motion--consecrated by Saint Oscar" (_Apes_, 498/519), is a concrete connection between the Sitwells and the Victorians and so a visible denial of the former's claims to be on the frontier of twentieth century literary developments. She is the dominant element of the complete family baggage that reveals in the Finnian Shaws what Lewis called "the strange embrace of Past and Present--of so casual a nature as to produce nothing but an effect of bastardry" (_Apes_, 491/512).

* * *

Because of Lewis's ongoing relationship with the Sitwells during the early 1920s, it is not surprising that he drew still more literary portraits from life as he observed it in the Sitwell households. The three interlopers, for example, or "the Unassimilable Three," "the three nonedescript strangers," "the mystery-men" or "Trio of Scandal," the "three whispering bandits," as they are variously called, are no doubt literary modifications of the three visitors Osbert Sitwell refers to as the Ruritanians in Laughter in the Next Room. The three interlopers in The Apes of God are characterized by the way they converse "with each other in low voices" (Apes, 355/372). They carry on what is referred to as an "anti-social mutter-à-trois" (Apes, 357/373) which is confused with the sounds of the loud-speaker. Once it is conjectured that the loud disturbing noise which is distracting everyone is being emitted not from the loud-speaker but, as Sib says, from "those three people over there" (Apes, 362/379), everyone's attention becomes fixed on the mystery-men, who wear steeple-hats and "look like three friends of Guy Fawkes" (Apes, 362/379):

> An uninterrupted hoarse whispering arises from the Trio of Scandal. Their postiche Fifth-of-november moustaches waggle in a manner that bodes no good for anybody. . . . Their neighbours incline their ears, in a relative hush, to surprise some sentence or some tell-tale exclamation, but it is out of the question to catch what they are saying, although their voices can be distinguished quite plainly. (Apes, 363/380)

The three interlopers, "impenetrably disguised, as to class or kind, though in sex there was some probability that they were just mystery-men and not women" (Apes, 365/381) bear an unmistakable resemblance to the three Ruritanians whom the Sitwells' mother met in Vienna and invited to spend the summer at Renishaw. Osbert Sitwell describes these curious visitors in Laughter in the Next Room:

> Ruritanian ladies in waiting have of cruel need to be more strict than any others in the world, in order to preserve, as it were, an equilibrium in the court. They may--indeed they must--be 'artistic';

> but never enough to give offense. . . . The style of talk they had to cultivate was a very special one, an art in itself, that could no doubt be mastered; because there was need of rigorous training in their small closed profession. . . . A moment's silence is as the unforgivable sin: the sound of voices must never be allowed to flag--the texture must be peppered with counters of an international ennui, to afford an air of cosmopolitan culture. But the talk must flow at one lukewarm level, except when stirred, as it flows round the base of some such granite monolith as 'How small the world is!'[73]

* * *

Further examples of identifiable characters can be provided from among those who appear in "Lord Osmund's Lenten Party." "Cockeye"--"the aged marquis," the father of the Finnian Shaws, is Sir George Sitwell, who has been referred to on various occasions as one of England's great eccentrics, even though Lewis himself related, in a letter to Violet Schiff from Renishaw Hall on 30 August 1922[74] that Sir George "is a very civil gentleman. . . ."[75] Lewis is not entirely unjust when he refers to the Sitwell father as "Cockeye," for Sir George Sitwell was notorious for his aberrant behaviour. His children, as Lewis suggests, delighted in relating humorous anecdotes about this strange man who was known for his "lavish prodigality and inexhaustible delight in extending, renovating, demolishing and re-building the gardens, terraces and wings of his country seat." This behaviour was affected not only by his passion for recreating "Medieval and Renaissance Italian garden layout and landscape," but also by his "morbid fear of germs and germ-bearing insects."[76] He was, as John Lehmann suggests, somewhat overbearing in relation to his children. In fact, Osbert tried at one point in the middle twenties to persuade Sir George to move to Italy. This step was taken for the sake of freeing Osbert, Sacheverell, and Edith from their father's "constant presence, his fussing interference . . . and his inescapable eccentric schemes."[77] He felt that it was "his duty to advise and guide 'the children': for such, [they] remained to him."[78]

The relationship between the Sitwell children and their father provided Lewis with subject matter representing an aspect of what he called the child-cult. Harriet is perceived as "[s]till making mud-pies at forty"(Apes, 494/515) and Phoebus is referred to as one who "will never grow up" (Apes, 495/517). Blackshirt tells Dan that the Finnian Shaw house is "a nursery" (Apes, 498/519) and the home of "God's Peterpaniest family" (Apes, 499/520).

It is with reference to the cult of the child that Lewis introduces yet another familiar figure into the Finnian Shaw circle. This is Julia Dyott, described as Harriet's friend, the "person with whom she lives" (Apes, 499/520). Blackshirt explains to Dan the unfortunate nature of Julia's presence in the Finnian Shaw family circle, declaring that to have Julia around is negative advertising for the other Finnian Shaws, who wish to be perceived as eternally youthful:

> Why need Harriet twenty years ago in choosing this woman-mate have chosen one older even than herself. That is how these distressed brothers argue. It would be so much nicer if Julia were younger than Harriet. What is the use of advertising oneself if one has that skeleton always in one's family cupboard! How could Harriet have been such a fool--why could she not have foreseen that twenty years hence she'd form part of a family-group who might become great Gossip-juniors. (Apes, 501/522)

Julia Dyott is modelled after Helen Rootham, who became Edith Sitwell's governess in 1903, when Edith was already 16 years of age. Herself a translator of French poetry (especially Rimbaud), Rootham encouraged Edith's artistic endeavours. The two women began to travel together when the younger was barely out of her teens, and in 1914 they returned to London, where they lived together.

Rootham figures in Edith Sitwell's early correspondence with Lewis, where, as Edith's companion, she was co-host to the artist on social occasions. In September 1920, for example, Edith Sitwell wrote to Lewis: "Helen Rootham and I are having a small party on Wednesday of next week. . . . We should be delighted if you would come."[79] In an undated letter, presumably sent around the same time, she wrote:

> Helen Rootham will be delighted to come and see you some time; she is still laid up after being knocked down by a bicycle. . . . She says an afternoon would suit her best. . . .[80]

The two women lived together until 1938 when Rootham, after an illness that lasted nine years--during which she was nursed by Edith Sitwell--died.

* * *

Close study of "Lord Osmund's Lenten Party" reveals how here, as in the rest of The Apes of God, Lewis drew rather precise likenesses of people and events that were familiar to him. "Lewis's ability to portray the mannerisms of people he knew was part of his satiric art," Rowland Smith recently observed.[81] This talent was also an imperative for the illustration (and qualification) of his satiric method.

Lewis, through Pierpoint and Zagreus, stated that the closer the fictionist comes to objective "scientific" truth about real individuals in his work, the less bearable the portraits would be: "none of us are able in fact, in the matter of quite naked truth, to support that magnifying glass, focussed upon us, any more than the best complexion could support such examination" (Apes, 257/270). Insofar as Lewis, in The Apes of God, intended to demonstrate the validity of this theory--and its implications for the writer of satire and of news-sheet fiction alike--he was committed to transposing, as nearly as possible (while, of course, adopting the air of detachment) material from the recognizable real world into the world of art.

e. Family Frauds

In The Apes of God the Lady Leo-Hunters in Chelsea recognize that Osmund is "nothing but an Ape in 'lion's' clothing" (Apes, 386/404) and so refrain from hunting him "upon the 'lion' basis" (Apes, 386/404) at any price. When this happens, Lord Osmund attempts to swell his position as a society animal by the advertisement of his noble pedigree. This, too, however, is a significant fraud, as Zagreus points out:

> 'They have nothing to do with those ancestors about whom they talk and who come into the big Finnian Shaw puff-ball as feudal ballast, who before being french-speaking nobles of the Pale, were paladins, in Anjou and Germany.' (Apes, 389/406)

Lewis was undoubtedly aware of the Sitwells' propensity to draw attention to their aristocratic lineage, as he demonstrates in his satiric reference to Osbert's source of pride: his Hanoverian features (which Lewis describes as akin to the "goat-like profile of

Edward the Peacemaker" [Apes, 355/371]). In questioning the legitimacy of the family's claims of pedigree, therefore, he questioned the very nature of the Sitwells' personal identity. And by basing his satire on fact, he placed his victims in the extremely uncomfortable position of having to encounter their personal and familial flaws in the looking glass while under the public eye.

The factual detail Lewis was able to draw upon in his satiric treatment of the Sitwell pedigree is the publicly recorded family history, which begins with the record of Simon Cytewel, in 1301, founder of a family which developed "in the usual way of minor country gentry,"[82] in successive centuries, prospering slowly but steadily increasing in wealth and eminence. George Sitwell,[83] in the early seventeenth century, turned to iron-founding (not chandlery, as suggested by Lewis). Through his enterprising skill, he developed, by the end of the seventeenth century, the largest company concerned with the manufacture of iron nails in the world. As John Pearson states, the newly-acquired wealth (in the context of the "peace and plenty" of the age) "brought polish, social opportunity and even a touch of learning to the family."[84] It was after this that a break in lineage, which was soon afterwards accompanied by a change of fortune, occurred. The new heir of Renishaw in 1776 was Francis Hurt, nephew (on his mother's side) of the bachelor and last male heir of the old line of the family, William Sitwell. On the occasion of his inheritance, he changed his name from Hurt to Sitwell and gave his young son the name of Sitwell Sitwell. This new non-Sitwell heir was the great-great grandfather of the Sitwell trio's father, Sir George.[85]

Lewis's debunking of the popularly-held Sitwell image did not involve merely his exposure of the idiosyncratic gap in the family's lineage. Related to this and central to the satire on the family is the strong suggestion that the members of the Finnian Shaw (and by extension, the Sitwell) family group are shams not only as artists and aristocrats, but also as worthy society hosts and hostesses. One of the first things about the character of the Finnian Shaws to strike the reader of "Lord Osmund's Lenten Party" is the bogus quality of the family's social pretensions, revealed in the ad hoc atmosphere of their banquet hall, with its "rushing, slovenly-dressed, hired waiters" (Apes, 350/366), its defective cutlery "of a quality found in cheap restaurants" (Apes, 352/368) and its "tactless table-ornaments" (Apes, 353/369) belying the attempt to suggest sumptuousness.

A close examination of the satiric portrait of the Sitwells as a whole reveals not only much that is simply humorous, but also material to support the contemporary protests of the Sitwell-defenders sustained by Lewis in 1930. In the end, it is not entirely surprising that Sacheverell Sitwell believed that The Apes of God was "a time bomb" meant to "mangle and destroy" his family,[86] nor that Lewis, in Zagreus's introduction of Dan to the likely events of the "Lenten Freak Party" referred to the event as the grand culmination of his apprenticeship, the "greatest battue [defined as the reckless or wanton slaughter of the weak or unresisting] of full-grown man-eating . . . to which you have so far been summoned" (Apes, 323/338).

f. All At Sea

In 1927 All At Sea: A Social Tragedy in Three Acts for First Class Passengers Only was published. The product of a collaborative effort of the Sitwell brothers begun in the winter of 1924-25, it was, as Osbert himself said, "a satire on current silliness."[87] The Sitwells, who had watched men like Huxley and Coward win fame and wealth by their writings, hoped that the notoriety they received at the hands of their literary betrayers might aid the success of their new work. Indeed, John Pearson notes that Osbert expressed anxious hopes to his publisher that some manager would produce it: "'Then we might all be rich!'"[88] All At Sea was published on 28 November 1927. In July of that year the Sitwells had already held a press conference to announce the play's completion.[89] As for the play itself, "First Class Passengers Only" was performed by the Sitwells and others at the Arts Theatre Club in London on the day of publication. There is no historical evidence to suggest that it was ever produced again.

The Sitwells' aspirations for the work on the one hand and its unmitigated failure on the other, provided material for Part XIII of "Lord Osmund's Lenten Party." Among the cast of characters of the play was a Francis Noel Marmaduke Malmesbury Blundell-Bludyer[90] and an able-bodied seaman named Squib, who were undoubtedly the antecedents of "Captain Blunderbuss and His Man Squib"--the two guests at Lord Osmund's party whose announced entrance arouses first anticipation and then frustrated disappointment in the Finnian Shaw brothers. When their footman proclaims the arrival of Blunderbuss and Squib "Lords

Osmund and Phoebus [turn] excitedly about both together" (*Apes*, 550/572), but the expected guests fail to make an appearance.

> There was no sign anywhere of Captain Blunderbuss and His Man Squib--no shadow without, suggestive of either master or man.
>
> 'He has gone my lord' the footman droned, in hollow adieu, to what he had supposed present. 'Captain Blunderbuss is not there my lord!'
>
> 'No so it seems!' sniffed Lord Osmund.
>
> 'He has gone!' Lord Phoebus told Lord Osmund.
>
> 'I can see that much Phoebus for myself!' Lord Osmund lispily snapped at that poor pierrot Phoebus.
>
> His elder lordship next shot a look of momentary suspicion at the footman.
>
> 'Has Captain Blunderbuss disappeared?' he asked. . . .
>
> 'I do not see him now my lord!'
>
> 'No--well I'm sure *I* can't--any more than you can! Don't announce people who are not there for the future!'
>
> 'No my lord!'
>
> 'Another time you might make sure if there's anybody there!' Lord Phoebus scolded him in aggrieved drawling aside.
> (*Apes*, 550/573)

Lewis undoubtedly used the episode to comment on the abortive debut of *All At Sea*, which Osbert himself--in the desperate-sounding concluding statement of his preface--described as a work that should "be *bought*, and *read* , *Now*: for in the future it will be a period piece."[91]

The play by the Sitwell brothers, along with Osbert Sitwell's preface, very likely contributed not only to the conception of Blunderbuss and Squib, but also to the prominence of the nautical imagery used mostly metaphorically in certain sections of the lenten party narrative. The image of King Kanute attempting to turn back the waves dominates the opening passages of Part XII of the novel. His antics are eventually overshadowed, however, in the first part of the party by the person of Bosun, the housekeeper/nurse/nanny who with her anachronistic "*keep-smiling* doggedness" (*Apes*, 436/455) and her bottle of Arquebuscade (Apes, 442/461), does her best to care for the principals of the Finnian Shaw ship.

Mrs. Bosun, the narrator indicates, is "born of nautical necessities, of sea-faring sans-gêne" (Apes, 437/456). She is a "period-person" (Apes, 435/454), a "great mastadon of a matron from the brutalest of the British Past" (Apes, 438/457) whose "period-body" (Apes, 437/456) wrapped in a "period-bodice-case " (Apes, 435/454) causes a "period-petticoat-rustle" (Apes, 435/454) when she walks on her "staunch sea-legs" (Apes, 436/455). She is pre-war, indeed, the novel suggests, "pre-French Revolution" (Apes, 440/460) and cannot survive the threatening waves of the post-war era. Because she has the role of chief protectress of the ship's personnel, her fate determines the fate of her ship-mates.

The fact that Bosun does, in fact, succumb to the waves emitted by the technology of the new era is of some significance for the Finnian Shaw situation as a whole. Her fit beside the wireless, as she is overcome supposedly either by the music of the Savoy band or the propaganda of the Third International, is the core of an elaborate Finnian Shaw joke. But the last laugh is not theirs: Mrs. Bosun stands alone as a force (anachronistic and greatly weakened) attempting to keep the Finnian Shaw ship afloat in the dark age of the post-war. Her fit spells doom for the ship's passengers.

In Osbert Sitwell's relatively intimate preface to All At Sea, entitled "A Few Days in an Author's Life," he explains how the great ocean liner on which the play's activities take place functions not only as what he calls a "suitable setting for the action of its epoch," but also as a symbol of the age.[92] It is in such a metaphorical framework that the nautical references in "Lord Osmund's Lenten Party" function. Sitwell's evocation, in his preface, of the great ship "Titanic" and its catastrophic end, serves to illuminate the meaning of Lewis's nautical metaphor, as well as the Sitwells' own. The Finnian Shaws, like the Sitwells' "First Class Passengers," are headed for the "grey terror and Atlantic darkness"[93] that are inevitable elements of the individual analogies in the respective texts.

> The end of that great ship on its maiden voyage, a tragedy which so profoundly moved the western world--though no one has quite understood the reason of the depth of feeling which it touched--was both a prophecy and a parable: a sign for all to see. In that lay its success as a tragedy. It was, indeed, the herald of calamity. . . .[94]

g. Kanute

Dominating the action of the first part of "Lord Osmund's Lenten Party" is the figure of Knut, or Kanute a "strange painted shamanised northern wanderer" (Apes, 356/372) known also as the Finn. He is identified with the Danish king, Kanute, who became ruler of all England in 1017 and tried (as the legend goes) to turn back the waves that threatened to carry invaders to the English shores. The waves fought by this man with "a voice for an apocalypse" (Apes, 356/372) in The Apes of God are not the kind that wear away the physical shores of England, however. It is above the din of a sluggish human tide at the very beginning of the lenten party that he begins to vociferate. Always appearing to be "on the point of tearing off the veil of grey restraint" (Apes, 367/384), he alternately makes defensive and offensive moves against whatever or whoever seems to threaten his central role among the guests. His weapons are, appropriately, the words of the zealous polemicist, Boileau, the most influential French exponent of classical standards in poetry. Known as the grand old man of French literature or the "législateur du Parnasse," Boileau waged war in the seventeenth century against dullness, pomposity, affectation, and pedantry.

At Lord Osmund's lenten party, Kanute attempts to use "the heavy blows of the beautiful verses" (Apes, 371/388) of Boileau to scuttle the mysterious interlopers who might eclipse his position as controller of the sounds that are the most prominent feature of the opening scene of the lenten festivity. The waves he tries to control are not unrelated to the sound waves of Mrs. Bosun's loud-speaker, as the text makes clear in the rather long passage describing the confusion about whether the "diabolical noise" disturbing the party-goers emanates from the wireless or "the three masked mystery-men."[95]

The three unidentifiable intruders, the "Unassimilable three" whose mutters threaten to drown out Kanute's trumpeting, are regarded by the disciple of Boileau as conspiratorial pedants. Significantly, they are mistakenly identified by Lord Osmund's malapropristic tongue as peasants:

> 'How stupid of me, how really asinine of me it was!' brayed the great victorian Osmund at that, the young Trollope-curate in person: 'of course I should have known all along--all the time they were really peasants!'
> 'Pedants!' Sib corrected.
> 'Yes of course, Pedants--I should have thought of that at once--did you?' Osmund chided himself again. 'But how stupid of me! I could kick myself!' (Apes, 371-72/388) [96]

The "peasants" of whom Lord Osmund speaks are uniquely related, in the machinery of images in this chapter, to Kanute/Boileau's "pedants." As the latter represent a threat to the authority of classicism in letters, the former (since the Russian revolution) represent a threat to the assumed authority of the aristocrat in politics (and so to the validity of Lord Osmund's inherited birthright). Thus Lord Osmund's confusion effectively draws together the cultural and political elements that define the central themes of the book, elements presently to be re-defined in the text in terms of the connection between the recurring motifs of gossip and revolution.

The waves that Kanute/Boileau attempts to turn back are voices that threaten revolutionary change in civilization and politics. These idiot-waves (as Zagreus calls them) transmitted in this society on the verge of breaking up, carry a message. "'Quite apart from the words,'" says Zagreus, instructing Dan in the art of observation, "'[c]hart the intonation, plot it—'"; the significance lies, he says, "'in the impact of the image'" (*Apes*, 385/403). The image that emerges is defined in the composite allusive characters of Kanute/Boileau attempting to stem a tide of "red" waves:

> But what are the Wild Red Waves Saying, Lord Osmund? Lord Osmund to the Dark Tower Came—but WHAT ARE THE WILD RED WAVES SAYING? If they were not there, then nor would you be either Osmund--anachronist—Kanute squatting fronting the flood-tide that is blood-red at the flood. Just out of reach. That is paradox if you like--such is the price of what we call 'Gossip'--the principles symbolised by the coloration of massacre military and civil, gollops everything except 'Gossip'--'Gossip' and more 'Gossip,' which (highly politic) it leaves standing as an advertisement. *That* it allows—for does not the mildew of the 'Gossip' throughout the land discredit everything the Red Principle moves to destroy—what else so much as it and the social facts to which that corresponds, could cause this society to

> look quite so foolish? The answer is nothing. All Revolution is preceded by 'Gossip.' (Apes, 386/403)

The Finnian Shaws, themselves the "embodiments of 'Gossip'" (Apes, 384/402), fail to recognize the connection Zagreus outlines here, and the implicitly self-destructive nature of their habits and identity. Zagreus, relating their self-immolatory activity once again to the Bosun-charade, notes the irony of their position:

> But attend! they are approaching their stupid orgasm. It is they who will have the fit! Watch them excite each other, see how they whip one another in perfect time with drawling tongues, they quite lash out—it is a slow approach to the delicious crisis—a heaven of small hate constructed of small-talk will explode as the joke bursts. Bang!—What a small return for so much solemn fuss?—not at all—ends and means, like effect and cause, are not marked off with such precision as all that! There, in another moment they will have their fit! You will see them 'die of' a little snuffling laughter. (Apes, 382-83/400)

h. The Politics of Revolt

In his Memoirs of an Aesthete, Harold Acton recalls an evening's entertainment at the home of Osbert Sitwell in 1923:

> Charades were played for the rest of the evening, and the most amusing represented the demise of a Teutonic Princess, impersonated by Sir John Hutchinson, with Eugene Gossens as the doctor, Lytton Strachey and Clive Bell as attendant royalties.[97]

This anecdote and Sacheverell Sitwell's comments about an evening of charades, in a 1918 letter to Lewis, indicate the source of the colonel-baiting episodes which Lewis used to determine the Sitwells' role in what he called the child-parent-war: their self-defeating, sentimental rebellion against the older generation, which was based on the premise that it was "the Old Colonels, in league with the Old Politicians (and all the sheltered Elders too old to be soldiers, in the decline of their days . . .)--who were responsible for the European War" (Apes, 555-56/578-79).

The public perception of the Sitwells as rather naive rebels against their elders and, Lewis said, against "the civilised order of the Western World" (Apes, 529/552) had been found to be remarkable as early as 1917, by contemporaries like Aldous Huxley, who, in a letter to his brother Julian wrote:

> I am . . . . contributing to the well-known Society Anthology, Wheels, in company with illustrious young persons like Miss Nancy Cunard, Miss Iris Tree and the kindred spirits who figure in the gossip page of the Daily Mirror. . . . The folk who run it are a family called Sitwell, alias Shufflebottom, one sister and two brothers, Edith, Osbert and Sacheverell--isnt that superb--each of them larger and whiter than the other. I like Edith, but Ozzy and Sachy are still rather too large to swallow. Their great object is to REBEL, which sounds quite charming; only one finds that the steps they are prepared to take, the lengths they will go are so small as to be hardly perceptible to the naked eye. But they are so earnest and humble . . . these dear solid people who have suddenly discovered intellect and begin to get drunk on it . . . it is a charming type. [98]

In Lewis's perception, the Sitwells' perpetuation of the child-parent-war, like the Finnian Shaws' baiting of the colonels--"these relics of mediocre Death-or-Glory"(Apes, 520/542)--was as destructively insolent and practically ineffectual as Harriet's stripping of Lady Truncheon's train ("truncheon": a staff or baton of authority) or the Sib's upsetting of Lady Hornspit's aspidistra (a plant by this time recognized as a symbol of Victorian middle-class philistinism, respectability, and stuffiness). The Sitwells' rebellion, Lewis insisted, was naive and ill-directed. In Blasting & Bombardiering, in the midst of his own reflections on the war, he commented in passing on what he called the "sentimental savagery" (Apes, 529/551) demonstrated in their attitudes toward the older generation:

> Nor could I obtain much from cursing my mother and father, grandmother and grandfather, as Mr. Aldington or the Sitwells did. For it was not quite certain that we were not just as big fools as our not very farsighted forebears.[99]

Lewis observed that the nursery philosophy--the Peterpanism--of the Finnian Shaws had significant political implications insofar as it tended to obscure the authentic villain of the war. For each of the colonels, like the hall-porter who impersonates Commander Perse in the colonel-baiting episode, is (in spite of his "fine court suit") empty of power (Apes, 520/541). He is the "gilt-edged serf of an anonymous System" (Apes, 523/545), the armed servant of big-business.

The exposition of the "politics of Revolt" (Apes, 530/553) in "Lord Osmund's Lenten Party" contributes significantly to the overall political focus of the novel. In particular, it illuminates Lewis's use of the pre-revolutionary situation of France described in the covering blurb on the dustjacket of the first edition of The Apes of God:

> Immersed in the make-believe of the adult nursery . . . [the dramatis personae] have become 'irresponsible baby-boys and baby-girls,' in the same way that the French Court, in the days before the Revolution, dressed themselves as shepherds and shepherdesses in their fêtes champêtres.

The analogy between the action of The Apes of God and the events of the French Revolution evident in the dust-wrapper blurb is expanded upon by Blackshirt in his broadcast analysis of the activities of the Finnian Shaws, "this seasoned caucus of celebrated poetical 'rebels'"

(Apes, 552/575). "'What are these bands of people doing but rehearsing upon these old dummies the darker and bloodier insults of Terror and of Revolution--all the time!'" (Apes, 529/551), he remarks, pointing out that the Finnian Shaws, with their misdirected rebellion, misjudge the revolutionary atmosphere that they sense around them:

> But is it not evident that they are rehearsing their own destruction, too? For does not this old harpy Harriet here owe everything--the little brassy tinkle of her verses for the grown-up nursery included--to the civilised order of the Western World--which in all her actions she insults, along with her fat walking-adenoid of a brother, Osmund! What would she be tell me that--except some embittered middle-aged char--derided for the airs she gave herself about her grandeurs past--if it were not for the remnants of Order--which, as an interesting 'rebel,' she is in every case committed to flout! (Apes, 529/552)

Indeed, Blackshirt suggests, Lady Harriet's "brutish amusements" identify her as the tricoteuse[100] of the new revolution--"so much socially upon the wrong side of the Barricade" (Apes, 529/551).

The metaphor of revolt is neatly worked out in the course of the colonel-baiting part of the lenten party. Most significantly, the Finnian Shaws' flouting of Order--here represented in the figures of the Colonels, the "last . . . survivals of a military caste" (Apes, 529/551)--is paralleled by the desired revolt of the Finnian Shaw servants against their anachronistic feudal masters, the Finnian Shaws themselves:

> Nothing in the footman's face (encountered downstairs) to laugh at or grin at. A stupid young footman liked to have the job of putting old red-faced bigwigs under lock and key. Of course. Standing in full farce of his powdered hair, plush and knee-breeches--stuffed into a stuffy state-suit (in mockery, so it must feel to have that on your back)--a gentleman's braided costume in 1750 thereabouts, today reserved for the underdog--that was a sort of insult who could not see

> that! Also of course it was the symbol of the external pomp of the underdog--empty of power, but with a fine court suit! Fine Clothes for The Under-dog! The real unseen master naked--upon some distant Beach--Venice or Florida. No need to explain to Ratner how such a powdered young man would like to have Lord Osmund too in a locked apartment. Who wouldn't--that was normal, but it was quite trite. The footman as a matter of course would relish it. To have everybody with the power to put him into a braided uniform (such as formerly worn by aristocrats, but only by poor bottom-dogs at present) with power to powder his hair white like age--it was but too self-evident that (standing to attention, at the end of an epoch) the young footman would not be far from wishing to tie Lord Osmund up in a gunnysack, to drop him down to the bottom of some disused 1750 well. (Apes, 519-20/541-42)

The sartorial metaphor established in this passage is given added significance at the end of the Colonel-baiting episode, when Commander Perse, the most sought-after of the military guests, is exposed by Admiral Benbow as an impostor (one who sails "the good ship Buncombe" [Apes, 535/558], that is, Bunkum: humbug speech-making meant to deceive). Perse is not a military V.I.P. at all, but a commissionaire, the hall-porter at the Teneriffe Club.

In the person of the impostor Perse, the Finnian Shaw household is infiltrated by the servant in the braided uniform--the hypothetical footman from the passage quoted above--who "would not be far from wishing to tie Lord Osmund up in a gunnysack, to drop him down to the bottom of some disused 1750 well" (Apes, 520/542). The Perse incident not only reveals the political blindness of the feudal Finnian Shaws, but also prefigures the final episode of the lenten party, where the door (symbol of the English landlord's authority, inviolability, and social position) of the Finnian Shaw house is removed amidst the futile protests of the lord of the manor.

*   *   *

The fact that the Finnian Shaws are both rebels and those who are rebelled against is related to "the strange embrace of Past and Present" (Apes, 491/512) that they represent. Ultimately, Lewis suggests, in spite of their avant-garde posture, they are "showmen of their Past" (Apes, 482/503) and of the past in general. They are period-people who conform to "the prevalent fashion for victorian atmosphere" (Apes, 350/367). Their real spiritual contemporaries are the Sib, the "muffled aged soothsayer . . . from that far land of the Nineties" (Apes, 354/370) and Harry Caldicott, an "ancient period-strumpet " (Apes, 464/484), a "fatuous relic" of the Nineties culture: "an Ape-of-god of Ninety-one" (Apes, 462/482).

It is because their attentions are focused on the people and events of a generation past that the Finnian Shaws fail to see the threat of the genuine revolution that is going on right among them. As Zagreus says, "'Class-War is in full swing at Osmund's'" (Apes, 428/447). Zagreus's assessment is borne out not only by Peters' comment that "'I shouldn't be surprised if one of these days . . . I didn't make a revolution not all on my own'" (Apes, 434/453), but by the peculiar behaviour of the servants throughout the lenten festivity:

> A man passed them, coming in, and called to Peters who was in conversation with the chef. He said--
> 'Old Osman sez 'e wants a saw!'
> 'What's 'e want now!--a saw!' called Peters with passion.
> 'Ah! A saw.'
> 'What's 'e want a saw for!'
> 'I dunno.'
> 'To saw off his bleedin' 'ed?'
> 'Ah!'
> 'Well 'e can't 'ave one the rotten ole barstard not tonight! Ask 'im what 'e wants it for!'
> ''E says 'is wife wants to play on it!'
> ''Ere tell 'er to go and play on 'er spinach bed instead!' Peters retorted violently, and turned his

> back upon the emissary.
> 'What's that you want mate--a saw?' asked the chef over the broad shoulders of Peters.
> 'Ah!'
> ''Ere's a saw!' the chef said, and he pushed towards him a short butcher's meat-saw, like a ragged hatchet.
> 'Ah take 'im that!' said Peters.
> The man wiped the saw upon a tablecloth.
> ''E says a long saw 'e wants.'
> 'Take 'im that, that's all 'e'll bloody well get tonight!' Peters told him.
> 'It don't matter not to me what 'e don't get guvnor!'
> The slouching man who was a hired waiter, went indifferently away, holding the heavy meat-saw.
> 'If 'e can't play on that mate tell 'im to come 'ere and fetch one 'imself!' Peters raised his voice to shout back out of the midst of his muffled heart-to-heart passages with the chef, Lord Osmund still indistinctly on his mind. (Apes, 427/445-46)[101]

The Finnian Shaw servants, Zagreus says, form "the nucleus of a Parliamentary Army" (Apes, 430/447). Lewis won't let his reader forget that this family—and the class they represent—are responsible for their own demise. Shortly after the episode quoted above, a footman appears in Mrs. Bosun's closet to announce that "'His Lordship has been injured in the kneecap by a saw!'" (Apes, 441/461).

* * *

The Finnian Shaws are of chandler-stock; they are descendants of a wax-tallow dynasty: lords over a technology moving rapidly towards obsolescence. They are indeed, then (as Lewis once wrote about the characters of his novel), members of a class that had outstayed its usefulness.[102] Significantly, the removal of the Finnian Shaw door (symbolically analogous to the storming of the Bastille) is accomplished through the use of electricity, the technology of the new era:

> As they went along the moonlit passages, Horace's torch flashing about like a restless eye, Dan thought he saw the doors moving. Looking back he caught sight of white faces, which had come out of

> them suddenly to spy.
>
> They went down the state-staircase. Horace crossed the hall to the American Bar. He opened the door, and flashed his torch all over it, not in the bar but at the door. Then he closed it again. After that he approached the double-doors of the Great Saloon and he looked at them in the same way. These he opened up, they were bolted. He flashed his torch--he reminded Dan of a burglar and took a few tools out of his pocket. Margolin held the electric torch and he started to remove the left hand door, it was a big one, standing upon a chair to reach the upper hinges. (Apes, 602-03/627)

(Even though there are three consecutive references to the torch, it is only when Margolin, emergent master of the new era, is mentioned as its bearer that Lewis indicates what manner of torch it is.)

Early in the lenten party Zagreus confides to Margolin that "'Osmund is his own worst enemy'" (Apes, 432/451). The Finnian Shaws, like their counterparts mentioned in the first edition jacket blurb, having retreated into a nursery situation, have failed, in the midst of their fêtes champêtre, to see that it is they who are threatened by revolution.

Ironically, they, as self-styled "rebels" themselves, have spent their time romping "outside the cockeyed Bastille where dwell the sinister communion of Wicked Giants" (Apes, 565/589). ("Cockeyed," that is Cockeye, and "the Wicked Giants" are, of course, their father and the colonels, representatives of the older generation against which the Finnian Shaws have rebelled.) But their condition of childhood cannot be sustained forever. As the Finnian Shaws are forced out of the nursery situation which has for so long been their refuge Lord Osmund begins to recognize the "formidable absurdity" of their former position. The Bastille is his own country house and he is one of the Wicked Giants:

> the nearer Lord Osmund draws to the Castle of the Giants, the more gloomy he becomes. Imagine a child, as he read in some fairy-book, growing and growing--until he was forced to recognize that he was now a giant like the one in the story! (Apes, 565/589)

16. ZAGREUS

a. The Ape of God

It is apparent that certain parts of The Apes of God were composed or conceived before Lewis's perceptions of an expiring society were augmented or modified by his growing political consciousness. The recognition of the work's varying stages of composition is useful for a consideration of the overall coherence of the novel and the specific role of those parts of the book the critic knows existed more or less in their final form early in the work's evolution. How, for example, does the highly allusive part of the novel entitled "Mr. Zagreus and the Split-Man" sustain an integral function within a structure that underwent a significant metamorphosis over time? Dominated by the eclectic symbolism of Zagreus's improvised magician's uniform, the narrative unit which describes the talismanic trappings of which Zagreus's sartorial garb consists was probably initially designed to establish a central metaphor for the book: the paradigmatic ape of God--the ape of God, that is, as Lewis would have seen him in the early stages of writing. In the completed novel, the passage appears as an obscure, fairly inaccessible lexical curiosity; it is rapidly eclipsed in the novel's narrative design and the reader's imagination by the more accessible prose of the lenten party.

Yet the passage--when raised above its subordinate structural position in the novel and perceived in terms of the authorial gloss with which it was introduced when it first appeared in print--is an informative (even if obliquely rendered) commentary on the character of Horace Zagreus and on the significant role of allusion in Lewis's method. "Mr. Zagreus," Lewis wrote long before the book was completed, "is an important ghost; he, however, remains attached to his disguises, a central myth."[1]

Zagreus's disguises, as Lewis calls them, are numerous and function to define the "central myth" of the novel: the ape of God. Whole books have been written on the figure of the ape as God-imitator; Lewis states that his own use of the image has Christian roots: "The origin of the title [of the novel]," he wrote in the dust wrapper blurb of the first edition, is (as has already been noted) "in the belief of the early christians that the world swarmed with small devils who impersonated the Deity. These imitators of God they called Apes of God."

Zagreus is the paragon of the ape. He is defined by his disguises. In fact, his true identity is never revealed to the reader: when Ratner says to him, "'I thought you were called--,'" Zagreus stops him "with a menacing hand. 'Never mind! NEVER MIND!'" (Apes, 341/357). The name he goes by is itself allusive. Zagreus, born to Zeus and Semele, was a pivotal figure in the Orphic myth. A quotation from a source contemporaneous with The Apes of God--W. Tarn's Hellenistic Civilisation--provides an interesting gloss on the mysteries of orphism with which Zagreus is identified:

> The universal basis of the mystery-religions was that you sought . . . 'salvation', by personal union with a saviour god who had himself died and risen again; to employ the well-known Orphic phrase, you ceased to be a worshipper . . . and became a Bacchus--you were as the god himself.[2]

Even more interesting and informative than Zagreus's association with the Greek mystery-religions is his connection with the myths of Egypt. The bird-headed illustrations introducing Parts II and 12 of the novel reinforce an identification, suggested in the text, of Horace as Horus, the hawk-headed Egyptian god. Horus's several manifestations include "Horus the Elder," a sky-god identified with the sun-god, Ra;[3] "Horus the Child," the man-child successor of Osiris; "Horus, the uniter of the Two Lands," who "is said to have sprung into being out of a lotus flower"; and "Horus, the son of Isis, the son of Isiris," who played an important part in the ceremony involving the weighing of the hearts of the dead.[4]

Zagreus is identified with the gods of ancient Egypt both through his name and through the constant pattern of allusions that identify him with central figures in Egyptian mythology. He prepares himself for Lord Osmund's party by donning a costume "bristling with emblems" (Apes, 334/350) that demonstrate his role as ape of God. "'Here I stand,' he says to Ratner, 'as florid as Boro-Badur. [Boro-Badur is a low pyramid in Indonesia, outstanding because of its great number of illustrative reliefs and its deeply symbolic conception.] My very fly-buttons are allusive'" (Apes, 337/353).

Beginning a rambling and eclectic catalogue of allusions to Mexican, Druidic, North American Indian, Hindu, Semitic, Greek, Christian, and Phoenician deities, customs, and talismanic artifacts, is a reference to Zagreus's defining headpiece:

> A large hat, the crown of which was the mask, representing in a projecting horn, pointing upward, the beak of the Ibis: a miniature representation of the Atef crown of Thoth. (Apes, 334/350)

The reference to Thoth, the ibis-headed god of reckoning and learning, scribe of the gods, and inventor of writing, is a significant and recurring one. Zagreus carries the god's reed and palette and his scale. This is the scale that figures prominently in the Egyptian doctrine of the Osirian hereafter. Every Egyptian expected that after his death he would face Osirian judgement, which consisted of the weighing of his heart. The process of judgement involved the god Anubis's placing of the dead man's character, in the form of his heart, onto the Great Scales where his sins were balanced against the image of Truth: a feather. Thoth acted as recorder of the judgement. If the man's sins would tend to tip the scales against him, and the gods who acted as assessors found him wanting in righteousness, his heart would be thrown to a monster, the "devourer of hearts." If he was found to be without sin, he was introduced--by Horus--into the chamber of Osiris where the verdict recorded by Thoth was confirmed and the justified man was admitted to the company of the gods. Every man looked forward, in his lifetime, to the day when he would become one with the gods.

In The Apes of God Zagreus, bedecked like a peddlar with the bric-a-brac of magic and myth, picks up from a table "a small beam and scales, its brass dishes suspended from chains," and explains to Ratner its allusive function: "'Thoth. It is a small balance--but too large for the hearts that we shall be called upon to weigh'" (Apes, 337/354). Metaphorically speaking, Zagreus, as a Thoth-figure, is on his way to the lenten party to weigh the hearts of those present.

Zagreus's sartorial identification with Thoth has further implications. The sacred animals of Thoth are the ibis (the beak of which prominently adorns Zagreus's mask) and the ape. Indeed the god himself is frequently represented as an ape, a fact that contributes to the allusive complexity of the title of Lewis's novel and helps to confirm one's perception of Zagreus as the most consummate of all Lewis's apes.[5] Furthermore, Thoth's identification with Hermes, messenger for the greater gods, could have provided a model for Zagreus's role vis-à-vis Pierpoint, who figures prominently as a god-like being whose doctrines are effectively dispersed by his adherents. Like Hermes, Zagreus wears a caduceus, a badge--probably of magical potency--which protects its bearer and shows him to be sacred.

In response to Zagreus's cataloguing the details of his costume, Ratner exclaims: "'It's a new eclecticism I had not suspected!'" (Apes, 340/357). Indeed, Zagreus's trappings, minutely detailed, include, among other things, artifacts associated with Huitzlipochtli, the Aztec war god; Siva, the male generative force of the Vedic religion; Druidism; Graziano, the gullible and amorous commedia figure; Roc, the gigantic and fabulous bird out of the Thousand and One Nights; various herbs; Easter and Orphic eggs; Shamir, the stone-cutting worm of Hebrew legend; Fortunatus, the hero of a popular European chapbook; Lillith, the vampirish female night spirit; Pyanespsia, the ancient festival held in honour of Apollo; and Melkart, the patron deity of Phoenicia. Apart from those allusions that form a cluster of references to specific Egyptian myths, few of the individual items in the catalogue have immediately apparent distinct and significant allusive roles. In the middle of his catalogue of Zagreus's magician's robes Lewis reminds the attentive reader that Zagreus, like the black jerkin he wears, is "fustian": that is, swollen with false dignity and too ridiculously pompous and bombastic to be immune from the satire of the book. Like his dupes, he too is ridiculous.

Taken altogether, the diverse elements of Zagreus's costume combine to form a mock-heroic corporate image of a rather absurd figure. Zagreus is, after all, the greatest ape of the lot. As Lionel Kein says, "everything . . . about him [is] borrowed" (Apes, 266/280).

b. The Practical Joker

Lewis draws attention to two categories of amateurs in the encyclical. These he classifies as "productive 'apes'": examples of "the Ape of God proper" (Apes, 122/130) and "unproductive apes." In a handwritten note among the papers at Cornell he cites Mrs. Farnham as a representative unproductive ape. She is one of those wealthy bohemians described in the encyclical who live in the studio-café society even though they produce no art themselves. They rely instead on the artist "to provide that significant apparatus of intelligence and beauty, which makes the pleasures of the wealthy less empty than they otherwise would be" (Apes, 119/127):

> For (living in studios and cafés and in consequence identified for the uninitiated with the traditional world of the 'Vie de Bohême') although they do not for the most part paint or write or compose music themselves, yet they find the art that is being produced in their neighbourhood a source of stimulating tittle-tattle. (Apes, 119/128)

The Pamela Farnham party serves (as Lewis presumably intended that it should) to demonstrate what the author wished to expose as the deplorable level of thought and interaction that characterized the frequent social gatherings held especially by the various wealthy lion-hunting hostesses of the day, women who (as Richard Aldington says of Lady Colefax) "in some mysterious way [were] supposed to be important to writers."[6] Mrs. Farnham and her friends provide Lewis with an opportunity to reproduce what C. J. Fox and Robert T. Chapman, in a "Sectional Introduction" to Unlucky for Pringle (1973), call "the inane parlour patter of London's Mayfair."[7] They function as characters who demonstrate how, as Lewis states in Blasting & Bombardiering, "the luncheon and dinner-tables of Mayfair were turned into show-booths"[8] upon the emergence of every new potential "lion."

The inevitable tea-party gossip related in this narrative episode is of particular interest in relation to Horace Zagreus, the subject of much of the discussion. Mrs. Farnham describes him as one who was well known before the war as a practical joker (Apes, 214/224-25). (Blackshirt later refers to him as the "great practical-joker of the Nineties" [Apes, 506/527].) Zagreus is based on Horace de Vere Cole, who was indeed, as Peter Quennell has confirmed in a letter (18 November 1976) to the author, famous as a practical joker. (Michael Holroyd, recalling Horace Cole's association with Augustus John in his biography of the latter, refers to Cole as "the celebrated" and "the country's most eminent" practical joker.)[9] Among Cole's most elaborate jokes was one perpetrated by him along with prominent members of the Bloomsbury group in 1910. On this occasion, he was among a group of people (including Virginia Stephen, Duncan Grant, and others) who disguised themselves (by means of theatrical costumes and make-up) as the Emperor of Abyssinia and his entourage and succeeded in persuading an officer of the Royal Navy to allow them to review the flagship of the British fleet, the Dreadnought. The group was received aboard ship with much pomp and ceremony and was given a royal tour. It was to the great distress of the authorities that the scandalous joke was later revealed to the British public. Lewis alludes to this well-known event--which came to be known as the Dreadnought Hoax--in a fragment of conversation at Mrs. Farnham's party:

> 'You remember how he dressed up as a Guards Officer and disarmed the sentries at the Palace?'
>
> 'Oh yes. That was one of his best known jokes wasn't it.'
>
> 'Did he really disarm them?' Snotty asked.
>
> 'Yes. He was in possession of the Palace for about ten minutes. The idea was to show how easy it would be to kidnap the King.' (Apes, 214-15/225)

The matter is further alluded to when Ratner tells Dan that Zagreus once "hoaxed the nation" (Apes, 418/437).

It is not only Zagreus's vocation that makes him recognizable as a caricature of Horace Cole. His "cavalry moustaches" (Apes, 42/49), his "albino mane" (Apes, 238/250), the facts that he is, as Dick Whittingdon says, "as deaf as a post" (Apes, 51/57), that he is a "commanding figure" (Apes, 40/46) who carries himself like "a seasoned colour-sergeant" (Apes, 42/48), dispel any doubt about the identity of Zagreus's model, for the image of Horace Cole is evoked by these details. Cole was, Michael Holroyd reports, a person with:

> needle blue eyes, a mane of white hair, bristling upswept moustaches and the carriage of a regimental sergeant-major. This exterior had been laid on to mask the effects of having only one lung, a shoulder damaged in the war and a considerable deafness.[10]

That Zagreus's model was readily identified by contemporaries who knew Horace Cole is made evident by comments in at least two letters Lewis received shortly after the publication of The Apes of God. On

5 July 1930 Augustus John wrote to Lewis about the novel, telling him in a post-script that it was a "master-stroke" for the author to have "endowed Horace Cole with intelligence!"[11] Several weeks later, on 27 July 1930, Marjorie Firminger wrote Lewis. These are the concluding remarks in her letter:

> I've got odd scraps of chit for you. Horace Cole turned up here yesterday & was very chatty as usual. He was most anxious for me to find the bit about him & the piece of string in The Apes. [H]e said he'd heard about it from a friend he met in the café. Much discussion about the book-- [12]

The episode to which Firminger refers is found on pages 215-16/226-27 of the novel. As a practical joke it is similar in nature to a Horace Cole prank recalled by Peter Quennell, who states that Cole, by posing as the leader of a group of municipal workmen, once managed to dig a large hole in the middle of Piccadilly.[13]

* * *

Considering the ease with which Lewis's contemporaries were able to identify Zagreus with Horace Cole and considering, at the same time, the high profile the latter had in their eyes as one who delighted in and occupied himself with making others appear foolish, it may be useful to speculate on the degree to which Lewis projected Zagreus's role in the novel as that of joker. To what extent, one might inquire, can the novel itself be seen (on one level at least) as an extended practical joke played upon the varied and numerous figures whose portraits appear in it? Certainly several of the contemporary references to the novel implicitly demonstrate an acknowledgement of the spirit of the practical joke in Lewis's gesture of dropping this bombshell called The Apes of God. A tone of playfulness is evident not only in comments like those of Augustus John and Marjorie Firminger recorded directly above, but also in the epistolary comments of Roy Campbell, for example, who wrote to Lewis stating that he "laughed over [the novel] like anything."[14]

To recognize Zagreus as a caricature of Horace Cole is to draw attention to the former's established role as practical joker (and to the novel as a joke perpetrated on certain of the author's contemporaries). This interpretation of Zagreus's function is supported by the structure of this character's activity in the central narrative portion of the text. At Pamela Farnham's tea party, Pammie provides as an illustration of Zagreus's joking nature the fact that he "once went off with our front-door" (Apes, 214/225); later in the discussion about the absent joker, one of the guests declares: "They say he is still apt to remove your front door" (Apes, 215/225). At the end of the novel, having several times established that Dan's picaresque journey is a series of jokes orchestrated by Zagreus and directed above all at specific members of the reading audience, Lewis suggests that, aside from the element of the practical joke evident in much of the material the novel presents, the serious nature of the text is not to be obscured or overshadowed. Zagreus's final gesture in the narrative of The Apes of God--his re-enactment of one of his best-known practical jokes (the removal of a door)--has serious implications for the joke's victim in the text and for the thematic structure of the novel as a whole.

Lewis interrupts Zagreus's final practical joke with what can only be regarded as a stern reminder to the reader that the levity of the lenten party must be regarded merely as an interlude preceding the necessary consideration of a more serious matter: the state of the nation. As his cronies remove the large door from the Finnian Shaw manor, Zagreus notices "a flyflot [sic] hackencross design in a rug at his feet" (Apes, 603/627). The reference is to the fylfot or swastika, the emblem which had been adopted by both the German Nazis and the British Fascists early in the 1920s. The allusion to the fascists (who represented a major strike-breaking force in 1926) alerts the reader to the additional political images that dominate this end to the lenten party and herald the onslaught of the General Strike. Images of levity and gravity merge on the last page of the chapter as Margolin leaps onto the door and begins to dance. On the page opposite the narrative at this point in the novel is an iconographic drawing of a human fist, traditional symbol of aggression. The removal of Lord Osmund's door--Zagreus's last joke--signals the beginning of the strike and the general upheaval that has been foreshadowed at various points throughout the novel. Margolin's dance upon the door is undoubtedly a carmagnole, the traditional dance of the French workman-revolutionary.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation begins with a quotation from Ezra Pound's essay entitled "Augment of the Novel," where Pound states that The Apes of God was a demonstration of Lewis's attempt to make "his terrorized or dithering reader" see. "From 'The Ideal Giant' to 'The Apes of God,'" Pound wrote, "Lewis has used a kind of writing akin to hyperdaylight. Hence the glare, hence the imperception, on the part of the weak-eyed and tenderminded, of his activities."[1] The image of hesitancy and indecisiveness that Pound projected onto Lewis's "reader" in 1941 describes an attitude still prevalent among reviewers and critics of the novel: The Apes of God, as Walter Michel recently observed when he remarked on the "failure by critics to assimilate [the work]," has remained--after half a century--"the most intractable of Lewis's fictions."[2]

Lewis scholarship persistently reveals the degree to which academic attention to The Apes of God has been and continues to be bogged down by a stance of pre-critical resistance to the text. Neither Fredric Jameson nor Jeffrey Meyers--who have produced the most recent full-length critical studies of Lewis--nor their reviewer in the October 1980 Times Literary Supplement, Bernard Bergonzi, have attempted to move beyond the weak and vague probing of the majority of the novel's critics. Bergonzi, who in 1973 declared that The Apes of God "is, of course, far too long and utterly intolerable to read right through more than once,"[3] derives comfort from his observation that "both Jeffrey Meyers and Fredric Jameson agree in finding [the work] unreadable."[4]

The Apes of God is, to be sure, not easy reading. The reader's first excursion through the work has been compared, appropriately, to Dan Boleyn's journey through the apes' London. A reader may, like Dan, have found himself bewildered in the midst of the General Strike, not having recognized the signs along the way that established the momentum that carries the novel to this complex combined gesture of rebellion and betrayal in the realms of politics and art. This thesis represents an attempt to read some of the signs embedded in the dense--and often magnificent--prose of an insufficiently appreciated text.

Because existing interpretive commentary on The Apes of God is so meagre in quantity and so fragmented in its apprehension of the text, I have attempted, as I stated at the outset, to write a form of introduction to the novel. In doing so, I have left much work to be done. A detailed study of the relationship between The Apes of God and Lewis's polemical works would further illuminate many of the complexities of the text, for example, as would a study of the novel as an example of peculiarly Lewisian satire. This thesis is an attempt, first of all, to create a means of entry into the work as a whole, to make it more accessible than it has been over the past half-century. To that end my outlining, in the preceding chapters, of the social, political, and literary contexts out of which The Apes of God emerged is meant to indicate how the major characters, symbols, and motifs contribute to Lewis's creation of his coherent and cohesive--if occasionally grotesque--vision.

* * *

Many commentators who criticize The Apes of God for its inordinate length condemn especially what they regard as the monotonous repetition of Dan's successive object-lesson tours through the ape-world of London. Assuming, wrongly, that the central action of the novel is directly related to the experience of this projection of Lewis's plain-man (who functions almost exclusively merely as a narrative *mechanism*), they grow progressively more impatient with what appears to be the repetitious futility of Dan's movements.

In fact, however, when regarded at close hand, the individual episodes of Dan's itinerary are revealed to be neither monotonous nor redundant; they are repetitious only in the eyes of Dan himself, who gains neither self-knowledge nor insight into the activities of others as he moves among the other characters in the work. The apparent sameness of Dan's numerous encounters (regarded from his point of view) and the fact that Dan himself is a "moron"--or, at best, a naif--suggest that the design of the middle chapters of *The Apes of God* and the dimensions of Dan's characterization can be usefully regarded in light of what Lewis, in *Time and Western Man*, referred to as the perceptual laws of "chronological mentalism."[5]

Aside from Dan's fundamental subjectivity (by virtue of the fact that he is human) demonstrated at intervals by his aching feet, his bleeding nose, and most dramatically by his bleeding through the boards of the cupboard in the middle of the vanish, Dan, as observer in the novel, might "just as well be a photographic plate as a human brain."[6] The episodes in the work are played on his mind as "a *series* of direct, flat (or not-memory-inflated) impressions,"[7] as Lewis stated when he described the chronological mentality in *Time and Western Man*.

Lewis's own articulation of how Dan functions in the novel primarily as cinematic or musical receptor rather than as a character central to the book is made explicit in the scene of the lenten party where Zagreus, who identifies himself as a "music-master," instructs Dan to register the "vibrations," the "idiot-waves" emanating from the embodiments of "Gossip" he has been instructed to observe:

> Have I not implemented my promise, to show you the Ape of God at-home? If you are at a loss to reach the meaning of any of his diversions, at once inform me! No man can guarantee to circumscribe, with cast-iron cartesian definition, all that they do. But that is not necessary. The posture you have adopted enables you to transcend such dialectic. The significance of these reduces itself to a sort of music, and _that_ you have trapped. That you should have trapped. I as your Guru am music-master in ordinary: I impart a musical art. The last thing you must look for is the message of an orderly sentence--the significance lies in the impact of the image. (_Apes_, 385/402)

Although it is through the vehicle of Dan's itinerary that most of the activities in _The Apes of God_ are presented, the central actions of the work are by no means dominated by him, nor is the interpretive accessibility of the text muddled in his apprehension of these actions. As a simple recording device, Dan is able to absorb superficially the crisply-defined, satiric images of the text while refraining from blurring, with his own obtuse interpretation, the work's rich layers of figurative suggestion. It is this many-layered dimension of the novel that escapes the reader who reads it more or less at the narrative level merely and so inevitably grows impatient as he holds his eyes on this static character before him.

* * *

In 1927 Lewis wrote:

> Were it the analysis of the conditions favourable to a virus, of some definite 'social problem' . . . it would not appear at all strange to devote a great deal of space to a minute examination of things that were in themselves, perhaps, not very important or interesting.[8]

These remarks, which he made in defence of his critical method in "Paleface," he might readily have applied three years later, to defend The Apes of God against the obscuring words of those early reviewers who regarded the novel as a work of personal disdain, a satire merely of recognizable but insignificant individual targets.

There were many commentators who declared soon after The Apes of God was published that the novel demonstrated that its author was, as Edgell Rickword said at the time, one of "the most forceful and resourceful prose-writer[s] of his generation," but most of these, like Rickword, went on to complain that Lewis spent his energy recklessly in that work, that he was "capable of more general and therefore more interesting satire than that arising from indignation at the presence of minor artists in the social limelight."[9] (Lewis's novel, Rickword insisted, put him in mind of "a powerful man tormented by gnats.")

The satire that Lewis composed was indeed, as this dissertation argues, "more general" than Rickword and others suggested, its characters less merely bothersome gnats than virulent toxins, in Lewis's view: viruses in the bloodstreams of nation and art-world. They were the embodiments of noxious influence, projections of the very organisms responsible for spreading the ravishing disease that Lewis believed would result in "the collapse of English social life" in the post-war era.

The languishing society, the immediate sources of its malaise, and Lewis's own prophetic vision of the heirs of the destruction he envisioned are presented, as the early chapters of Part II of this study suggest, by characters who people the structural frame of the novel. First, there is Lady Fredigonde, who embodies the Victorian temper and Victorian ideals grown sour, her vision of the imminent demise of her world presented in the fragmentary images--the visual stutter--of her mental cinema. Her expiring in the arms of Zagreus, the master of the revels and consummate ape, follows her self-immolatory killing of Sir James and marks the strange death of Liberal England. With her is Bridget, the Victorian maid, seen at the outset as already nurturing an attitude of rebellion sown in the liberal legislation of the late nineteenth century. Her complicity in the annihilation of her master at the end of the novel is a logical extension of her hesitant servitude in "The Prologue."

Waiting below--not in the traditional haunts of the lower class, the hell-hole of the lord's kitchen, but in the great Victorian reception-room--is the proletarian genius-in-embryo, Archie Margolin. He is the middle-man between upper and lower classes, whom Lewis, perceiving the developing political pattern whole, predicted would not rid the social body of disease, but would accommodate himself to the debilitating sickness, adopt and camouflage its symptoms--the spasms of chorea--as he danced to the jazzing, "nigger-bottom-wagging" rhythms of death-the-drummer.

The symbolically-charged characters whose actions and interactions establish the immediate political context of The Apes of God operate in a frame enclosing the essential core of the roman à clef. The connotative value of the characterization of Fredigonde, Bridget, and Archie Margolin has the quality of symbol. They, unlike the apes themselves, seem to have no actual human antecedents or models in the art-world of London in the 1920s.

Dominating the core of The Apes of God, however, and figuring as the primary characters in the work as roman à clef are the principal apes: Dick, Richard and Jenny; Ratner; Lionel and Isabel Kein; and the three Finnian Shaws. Modelled for the most part on actual people whom Lewis knew well in the early 1920s, these characters gain political significance by virtue of the fact that the patterns of their activities and relationships run parallel to the gestures of rebellion in the larger society. The class-war that is in full swing at Lord Osmund's at the end of the novel is prefigured, as has already been indicated, for example, in the attitudes and actions of the ape-flagellant and the men who serve him. In the Lionel Kein chapter, hosts and guests alike mark time as death-the-drummer gains momentum in the inexorable movement toward the extinction of a social, political, and artistic order. The arrogant feudal assumptions of the world's ape, Dick Whittingdon; the obsessive embalming of the past by the Lionel Keins; the naive rebellion of the Finnian Shaws and the "immense universal disaffection" (Apes, 153/163) of Ratner lead to the dynamics of the General Strike, Lewis suggests, as surely as the activities of these apes lead to a world without art.

* * *

The shift of pre-eminence and power that Lewis regarded as a major dislocation in the post-war worlds of politics and art is a primary concern in The Apes of God. It is embodied in the motif of the stolen caps in Lady Fredigonde's prophetic personal photoplay in the novel's prologue and is evoked again near the end of the work by Peters, the Finnian Shaw butler, who imagines that in the "impending British Terror" in which he expects to play a part, "all his highly-placed arch-enemies" would be compelled "to forfeit the least important parts of their bodies, namely their head-pieces"(Apes, 434/453).

Just as Lady Fredigonde's day and night cinema in the prologue begins to project its prophetic scenario upon the screen of her mind, the Victorian lady deliberately embraces a symbol of the inherent dominance of her class, and decides that she will be content, by all means, to survive someday merely "as a cap" (Apes, 18/23). She fails to realize that she has already forfeited her Victorian pre-eminence in spite of herself, that she has been wafted softly, as Lewis puts it, beyond "the base of the GREAT WAR--. . . like a large and sodden leaf" (Apes, 24/30), that only the trappings of the heretofore inherent power of her social position remain. The war was the great leveller; Lady Fredigonde exists beyond it as a monument to its massive folly and to the foolishness of the peace that followed. She carries on after 1918 only "after the manner of a dying top" (Apes, 23/29). The artist-imposters who people the rest of the novel are, like this "Veteran Gossip-Star," members of an obsolete class. Sustained by the very nineties culture that Lady Fredigonde embodies--the culture they presume to have surpassed--they cling tenuously only to the costumes and postures of an extinct era in a society, as Zagreus says, subject "to violent fluctuations and to abrupt decay" (Apes, 450/469).

It is in the penultimate chapter, "Lord Osmund's Lenten Party," that the themes of political and cultural death in this "last ditch of a ruined society" (Apes, 284/297) are most obviously related and most explicitly portrayed. The chapter, with its multiple focus, affords Lewis the opportunity to explore various issues contributory to the cultural decay demonstrated in The Apes of God. Here, at varying intervals, issues related to the intersection of war and revolution (that is, specifically, the First World War and its cultural and political ramifications) are explored. Here Lewis indicates why Osmund, the bogus aristocrat and man-of-letters, in whom political and artistic pretensions are founded in "middle-class snobbishness" (Apes, 389/406), is marked down "for extinction" (Apes, 432/451).

It was in the person of Lord Osmund, modelled on Osbert Sitwell, that Lewis could project most explicitly how revolutionary principles of art and politics mirrored each other and in fact intersected in the trough between the wars. Lewis believed, as he stated explicitly in 1934, that the answer to what would happen in art in an advancing industrial age was "to be found much more in politics than elsewhere."[10] It was through his examination of the attitudes and activities of Lord Osmund and the other apes in the context of political upheaval that Lewis was able to dramatize what he perceived as the death of art in the years between the wars.

* * *

"[O]ur society is a cemetery" (Apes, 242/254), Zagreus tells Dan Boleyn, remarking on what Pierpoint calls the "ghoulish" activity of Lionel Kein. The effluvium of death that dominates the "Prologue" of *The Apes of God* and establishes the mortuary theme suffused throughout the work becomes especially evident in the Kein household. As he waits being admitted to the home of his estranged friend, Zagreus has a vision of "the mortuary chariot from which Proust peeped" (*Apes*, 237/249). Inside the Kein mansion, well-insulated from the outside world, are people who embody what Zagreus (quoting Pierpoint) calls "'the last extremity of maudlin decay'" of this society: "'the last pitiable success of the ancien régime'" (*Apes*, 242/254).

The atmosphere of the chapter is sustained by the hypnotic rhythms of the death-dance; the dominant motif, the accompanying improvisations on the theme of death. Isabel Kein's glockenspiel arpeggio punctuates at intervals the extended musical metaphor that defines the Keins' activities. When Zagreus first enters the dark drawing-room of the Kein manor, he hears her (unwittingly, of course) evoking the murky twilight of this expiring era:

> Ich gehe nicht schnell, ich eile nicht
> durch Dämmergrau in der Liebe Land.
>
> (*Apes*, 239/251)

Isabel's glockenspiel arpeggio (where the harsh, clipped sounds of the tuned steel bars of the glockenspiel have replaced the finer, delicate sounds of the harp ["harpeggio"]) is alternated throughout the chapter with the rasping cackles of Lionel's death-rattle.

The Keins are hosts to an ape-herd who, as admirers of the writing of the Salon, perpetrate the false-snobberies of the Democratic order carried over into art. As writers of personal gossip-column fiction, they are representatives of what Lewis in *Time and Western Man*, called "a new type of historical practitioner."[11] Their power lies in their methodical destruction of the great through socio-literary activity; their manifest function is to be embalmers of the age. The communal funerary activities of the Keins and their guests are marked, typically, by a mechanistic rattle of their own making:

> Their voices produced a booming volume of sound. Most began by tuning-up the complicated round or sphenoid wind-instrument they had brought with them, that is their respective headpieces--in which the air trumpeted and vibrated in the darkness. But the tumult increased. At length each guest (with the help of his sinuses and with a possible auxiliary trumpet in the laryngeal pouch, and the neatly-ranged teeth) got really started. Soon all were working their bellows forcibly. When most in form, the hard palate could be heard producing its deafening vibrations in the buccal cavity. Eagerly they thrust their heads forward, and launched their verbal symbolizations upon the puffs of deoxydized air, in the direction of their neighbours. These responded--broke across, out-trumpeted their opposites.
>
> Isabel Kein conducted with a contemptuous smiling mastery this discordant herd, she had negligently collected. If no sound came from one of them (although he seemed to wish to trumpet, but lacked perhaps aplomb) he would be dexterously stimulated by his hostess. She would invite him to contribute to the general orchestration. (Apes, 272/285-86)

The Keins and their guests, Lewis suggests, like the apes found throughout the novel, perpetuate the insistent rhythms that mark their own demise.

* * *

Although not all who have read The Apes of God agree with T. S. Eliot who wrote, as has already been noted, that Wyndham Lewis was the "greatest prose master of style" of their generation, few, I think, would find themselves absolutely unable to see why Eliot, as the editor of The Criterion, stated that it was worth running his influential magazine just to publish the early fragments of the novel. It is not, after all, the quality of Lewis's prose, for the most part, that has been found wanting by readers of the book. Rather, critical remarks about the work have been typified by assessments like V. S. Pritchett's when he stated that The Apes of God is "[e]xciting sentence by sentence, image by image, [but] all too much page by page."[12]

That critics like William H. Pritchard found The Apes of God a "monumentally dead"[13] book was evidently because they, like Pritchett, did not perceive the controlling vision, the underlying structure that makes the various passages of prose--generally acknowledged as brilliant in themselves--cohere. Failing to see beyond the particular word or image or action, they were not able, apparently, to "assimilate" (as Walter Michel puts it) the novel, and so remained unconscious of the sustained prophetic vision of "a state of society" that Pound, for example, recognized as being the very essence of the work. It is significant, I think, that negative critical responses to The Apes of God have characteristically taken the form of isolated, almost haphazard stabs at the text, an approach that results, predictably, in the critic's fragmented apprehension of the novel.

The Apes of God affords few of the conventional pleasures of plot and character the reader might expect from a novel *qua* novel. Lewis's vision is presented without his acceding to the demands of the traditional, progressively-articulated plot, and his particular satiric method precludes his creation of characters with whom the reader can readily identify. Lewis himself stated in retrospect (in September 1947) that he would not even necessarily classify this work as a novel, "but as satire, for as satire it was written, and not as a realistic narrative, as was Tarr."[14]

Despite the failure of The Apes of God to satisfy many of its readers who come to it expecting a conventional novel, it does not fail ultimately even in this regard. The rich and precisely-articulated prose; the consistent texture made up of controlled symbols, images, motifs, and allusions; the macrostructures and microstructures that form the outer and inner frameworks; the humour and acute satire are sustained throughout and provide, for the patient and attentive reader, not just isolated passages of brilliant prose, but an entire work of cohesively-patterned writing which makes of The Apes of God a sustained and significant work of fiction. Equivocations such as those of Robert T. Chapman and Walter Michel--who have come to call The Apes of God (and some others of Lewis's works) "fictions"--side-step the problems that arise from those writers' expectations of the work. Moreover, such equivocations are unnecessary if they lead the reader to demand from Lewis less of an artistic whole than from other novelists.

One of the primary aims of this dissertation has been to elucidate the value of The Apes of God in terms of the categories established by Pound when he stated, in 1941, that the work "is essential to the understanding of a twenty year English epoch."[15] But The Apes of God is more than a document of interest to historians. This thesis also attempts to reveal the controlling structures of the work and so to demonstrate how Lewis's book functions successfully as an intellectual and aesthetic whole.

ENDNOTES

Introduction

[1] Ezra Pound, "Augment of the Novel," p. 52.

[2] Ibid., p. 53.

[3] Ibid., p. 52.

[4] Ibid., p. 53.

[5] Lewis, "About Myself," p. 12.

[6] Pound, "Augment of the Novel," p. 52.

[7] See Lewis, The Diabolical Principle and The Dithyrambic Spectator, p. ix.

[8] W. K. Rose remarks, in a sectional introduction in The Letters of Wyndham Lewis: "The twenty years between the two wars were the most fruitful of Lewis's life. Between 1920 and 1939 he wrote twenty-three books, revised three more, and edited and wrote most of two reviews (The Tyro and The Enemy) and one pamphlet. The accomplishment becomes more remarkable when one considers the significance of this work. The three vast critiques of mass mind and its modern diseases--The Art of Being Ruled, The Lion and the Fox, and Time and Western Man--formed the foundation of all Lewis's future criticism and provided a stimulus for many of the younger artists and intellectuals in Britain. The Childermass, The Apes of God, and The Revenge for Love mark, for most readers, the apex of their author's achievement. Add to this his most incisive volume of literary criticism (Men Without Art), a brilliant collection of essays on aesthetics (Wyndham Lewis the Artist), his only book of poetry, his ebullient autobiography, and such provocative essays in social psychology as Pale-face and The Doom of Youth, and one gets some notion of the talent and energy operative in Lewis during these years" (p. 121).

[9] It should be noted here that the dates of publication of Lewis's works do not necessarily correspond with their times of composition. The Apes of God itself provides adequate evidence for this: parts of the novel appeared in print as early as the spring of 1924.

Chapter 1

[1] Besides numerous casual references to Lewis's right-wing sympathies in various critical responses to modern literature, there have been several explicit investigations into Lewis's political "rightism." Consider, for example, Geoffrey Wagner's "The Fascist Mentality--Wyndham Lewis" (1968), John Harrison's The Reactionaries (1966), Charles I. Glicksberg's The Literature of Commitment (1976) and Alastair Hamilton's The Appeal of Fascism (1971).

[2] See Lewis, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, p. 155.

[3] See Lewis, ibid., pp. 155, 156.

[4] See Lewis, ibid., p. 410.

[5] Lewis, The Apes of God (The Arthur Press, 1930), p. 530; (Penguin Books, 1965), p. 553. All subsequent references to this novel will appear in the text, with page references to both The Arthur Press and Penguin editions. The format will be thus: (Apes, 530/553).

[6] Lewis, Rude Assignment, p. 160. "I should add," he says here, "that its publication was unavoidably postponed: its true date is before, not after 'The Art of Being Ruled' (1926)."

[7] Lewis, Rude Assignment, p. 59.

[8] Ibid., p. 59.

[9] Lewis, Anglosaxony, p. 22.

[10] Lewis, "Editorial," The Enemy, No. 2, p. xxxiii.

[11] Lewis, "Say it With Leaves!," pp. 1-3.

[12] Lewis, "Mr. Zagreus and the Split-Man," p. 124.

[13] Ibid., p. 124.

[14] Lewis, Dust-wrapper blurb for the first edition of The Apes of God.

[15] Lewis, Rude Assignment, p. 170.

[16] Lewis, Blasting & Bombardiering, p. 339.

[17] Lewis, Rude Assignment, p. 170.

[18] Ibid., p. 171.

[19] Ibid., p. 53.

[20] Lewis, "Introduction to the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition," p. [5].

[21] Ibid., p. [1].

[22] Ibid., p. [2].

Chapter 2

[1] Sybille Bedford, Aldous Huxley, I, 122-23.

[2] Ibid., 1, 123.

[3] Ibid., 1, 123.

[4] Jerome Meckier, Aldous Huxley, p. 119.

[5] Ibid., p. 121.

[6] Peter Firchow, Aldous Huxley, p. 58.

[7] Ronald Clark, quoted in Firchow, ibid., p. 59.

[8] Firchow, ibid., p. 58.

[9] Ibid., pp. 58-59.

[10] See Michael Holroyd, Lytton Strachey, p. 446; Peter Quennell, The Sign of the Fish, p. 120; Sybille Bedford, Aldous Huxley, 1, 123.

[11] Richard Gill, Happy Rural Seat, p. 141.

[12] Firchow, Aldous Huxley, p. 58.

[13] Harry T. Moore, in D. H. Lawrence, Collected Letters, 1, 449.

[14] D. H. Lawrence, Collected Letters, 1, 502.

[15] Ibid., 1, 508.

[16] Ottoline Morrell, quoted by Moore in Lawrence's Collected Letters, I, 509.

[17] Osbert Sitwell, Those Were The Days, p. viii.

[18] Edith Sitwell, Selected Letters 1919-1964, p. 231.

[19] Georg Schneider, Die Schlüsselliteratur, 1, ix.

[20] Ezra Pound, Pound/Joyce, p. 241.

[21] Frank Swinnerton, quoted in Satire & Fiction, p. 35.

[22] J. D. Beresford, quoted in Satire & Fiction, p. 25.

[23] John Grosvenor, quoted in Satire & Fiction, p. 35.

[24] Montagu Slater, quoted in Satire & Fiction, p. 39.

[25] Augustus John, quoted in Satire & Fiction, p. 27.

[26] Consider, in this context, the following statement from Lewis in Men Without Art: "In this book I have, not for the first time, proceeded from the particular to the general--from the concrete to the abstract--from the personal to the theoretic. . . . So I have taken the relatively engaging personalities of Messrs. Hemingway and Faulkner and used them as an advance-illustration, as it were, of what I have to say" (p. 7).

Chapter 3

[1] This work is cited here as: Lewis, [Prospectus for the privately printed limited edition of The Apes of God].

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Lewis, [Foreword to the cheap edition of The Apes of God], pp. 1-2.

[5] Lewis, [Prospectus for the privately printed limited edition of The Apes of God].

[6] R. Ellis Roberts, quoted in Satire & Fiction, pp. 10-12. In August the New Statesman published Ellis Roberts' own review of The Apes of God. This notice was not a particularly critical one, a fact that makes his motives for rejecting Campbell's review rather confusing.

[7] See W. K. Rose, in Lewis, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, p. 190.

[8] See Rose, in Lewis, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, p. 197.

[9] Lewis, Satire & Fiction, p. 8.

[10] Lewis, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, p. 190.

[11] Douglas Goldring, The Nineteen Twenties, p. 110.

[12] Lewis, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, p. 190.

[13] Ibid., p. 192.

[14] Morrow and Lafourcade describe this as a broadside published in fall 1930 "to promote interest in The Apes of God" (A Bibliography of The Writings of Wyndham Lewis, p. 56). Pound and Grover state that according to "a note at Buffalo in Lewis' hand this broadsheet was intended to be put up in shop windows to draw attention to the pamphlet Satire and Fiction" (Wyndham Lewis: A Descriptive Bibliography, p. 179).

[15] Lewis, [Broadsides concerning reaction to *The Apes of God*].

[16] Lewis, *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, p. 490.

[17] Geoffrey Grigson, *A Master of Our Time*, p. 3.

[18] Ezra Pound, "D'Artagnon Twenty Years After," pp. 453-54.

[19] Lewis, *Blasting & Bombardiering*, p. 32.

[20] Ibid., p. 36.

[21] Lewis, *The Enemy* No. 3, p. 49.

[22] Ibid., p. 43.

[23] See the cover of *The Enemy* No. 3.

[24] Lewis, *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, p. 196.

[25] Ibid., p. 197.

[26] Ibid., pp. 196-97.

[27] A cheap edition (a photographic reproduction of The Arthur Press edition) of *The Apes of God* was published in London by Nash & Grayson in November 1931; it was closely followed by a cheap American edition published in New York by Robert M. McBride in February, 1932. Arco Publishers issued a 25th anniversary edition, with an introduction by the author, in London in February, 1955. Most recently (in 1965) the novel was published in Penguin's "Modern Classics" series. All editions are now out of print. (In his review article in *Enemy News*, No. 13 [Autumn 1980], Walter Michel mentions a "projected reprinting of *The Apes of God*" [See "Lewis Revalued?" p. (8)] but does not elaborate on this.) For further details about all editions, see Morrow and Lafourcade, *A Bibliography of the Writings of Wyndham Lewis* or Pound and Grover, *Wyndham Lewis: A Descriptive Bibliography*.

[28] That the article was not written as a foreword to *Satire & Fiction* is evident in the internal references to *Satire & Fiction* as an existing publication and in references to the advertisements that the cheap edition of *The Apes of God* was to carry: "you will observe, in the midst of the text of the novel that follows an advertisement for Lysol" (Lewis, [Foreword to the cheap edition of *The Apes of God*], p. 6).

[29] Lewis, [Foreword to the cheap edition of *The Apes of God*], p. 1.

[30] Ibid., p. 5.

[31] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

[32] Lewis, "Introduction to the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition," pp. [1]-[2].

[33] Ibid., pp. [2]-[3].

[34] Ibid., p. [5].

[35] Ibid., p. [2].

Chapter 4

[1] Bernard Bergonzi, The Twentieth Century, p. 211.

[2] Lionel Stevenson, The History of the English Novel, XI, 175.

[3] Ibid., p. 177.

[4] V. S. Pritchett, Books in General, p. 252.

[5] William H. Pritchard, Wyndham Lewis, p. 71.

[6] Ibid., p. 77. More recently, in Fables of Aggression (1979), Fredric Jameson has referred to The Apes of God as "virtually unreadable for any sustained period of time" (p. 5).

[7] Ibid., p. 86.

[8] Ibid., p. 79.

[9] Ibid., p. 80.

[10] Ibid., pp. 80-81.

[11] Ibid., p. 78.

[12] Geoffrey Wagner, Wyndham Lewis, p. 251.

[13] Ibid., p. 251.

[14] Hugh Kenner, Wyndham Lewis, p. 102.

[15] Cecil Roberts, quoted in Satire & Fiction, p. 35.

[16] L. P. Hartley, quoted in Satire & Fiction, p. 35.

[17] [Anon.], quoted in Satire & Fiction, p. 38.

[18] T. S. Eliot, quoted by Rose, in Lewis, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, p. 140.

[19] W. B. Yeats, quoted in Satire & Fiction, p. 29.

[20] Timothy Materer, Wyndham Lewis the Novelist, p. 27.

[21] Ibid., p. 141.

[22] Ibid., p. 82.

[23] Ibid., p. 166.

[24] Robert T. Chapman, "Satire and Aesthetics in Wyndham Lewis' Apes of God," p. 135.

[25] Paul Edwards, "The Apes of God: Form and Meaning," p. 148.

[26] Ibid., p. 136.

[27] See Jeffrey Meyers, "Self Condemned."

[28] Meyers, The Enemy, p. 161.

[29] Ibid., p. 48.

[30] Ibid., p. 179.

[31] See ibid., p. 181.

[32] Ibid., p. 147.

[33] Walter Allen, The English Novel, p. 439.

[34] John Gawsworth, Apes, Japes and Hitlerism, p. 64.

[35] Cyril Connolly, Enemies of Promise, p. 61.

[36] Pritchett, Books in General, p. 252.

[37] John R. Harrison, The Reactionaries, p. 99.

[38] Frank Swinnerton, The Georgian Literary Scene, pp. 354-55.

[39] Richard Aldington, Selected Critical Writings, 1928-1960, pp. 24-25. (See also Satire & Fiction, p. 32.)

[40] Lewis, quoted in Louise Morgan, Writers at Work, p. 48.

[41] The sentence, "He is a solitary raider" is crossed out in the typescript of The Apes of God located at S.U.N.Y.A.B. (Buffalo).

[42] Lewis's references to gangs and racketeers are illuminated by much of what he wrote in Satire & Fiction. Consider, for example, the following quotation from the typescript of "A Storm in that Tea-Cup Called London": "In Chicago the different Rackets (not literary, of course, but mainly liquor) have all tended to concentrate into one large criminal 'Trust', dominated by a single underworld czar. In London the literary gangs, as time goes on, do, in the same way, draw together. There is no single Capone-like figure, it is true: but there is a large measure of business understanding between the Book-Bosses. Of these famous gangs the 'Bloomsbury' was originally an amateur Racket. The gangs of professional journalists (with their Fleet Street Public Houses, where new raids were planned) were mere purely money-making organisations. And of course, Mr. Lewis's special happy-hunting-ground, in the AGE OF THE GREAT LOG-ROLLERS, has been that social world, which overlaps, interpenetrates, and indeed entirely absorbs, the world of Art and Letters: the gangs he has mainly attacked are the amateur log-rolling Rackets, not the professional hearties of Fleet Street" ("Satire & Fiction," p. [3]).

[43] Lewis, quoted by Meyrick Booth, "Our Sham Society," p. 707.

[44] Ibid., p. 707.

Chapter 5

[1] The draft of 1931 differs from the published version only in minor modifications in spelling and punctuation.

[2] Lewis, Blasting & Bombardiering, pp. 6-7.

[3] Lewis, "Foreword to the cheap edition of The Apes of God," p. 6.

[4] Lewis, Rude Assignment, p. 141.

[5] Lewis, "Foreword to the cheap edition of The Apes of God," p. 7.

[6] Anne Wyndham Lewis, "Preface to the New Edition," Blasting & Bombardiering, [n.p.].

[7] Lewis, Blasting & Bombardiering, p. 1.

[8] Ibid., p. 1. Lewis was not unique in his perceptions; his views of the remarkable impact of the war have been reiterated by historians of the period. Referring to the "profound influence upon British society" of the First World War, Derek Fraser for example, author of The Evolution of the British Welfare State (1973) wrote: "quite simply it swept away a whole world and created a new one. Things would never be quite the same and the Edwardian epoch became a vision of the distant past as though a great chasm separated 1918 from 1914. This was in fact the greatest watershed of modern British history" (p. 164).

[9] Lewis, Blasting & Bombardiering, p. 4.

[10] Ibid., p. 17.

[11] Ibid., p. 1.

[12] Ibid., p. 17.

[13] Lewis, Rude Assignment, p. 169.

[14] Lewis, Blasting & Bombardiering, p. 17.

[15] Lewis, Rude Assignment, p. 169.

[16] This perception is reiterated by the historian, C. L. Mowat's interpretation of the time. Mowat's opinion is given prominence in the first paragraph of his history of the inter-war years, Britain Between the Wars (1955), where he states: "When the war ended in November 1918, there were few who did not hope that the losses and sufferings it had brought might be redeemed in a better world. . . . The history of the twenty years between the two world wars is the history of the disappointment of these hopes" (p. 1).

[17] Lewis, Blasting & Bombardiering, p. 1.

[18] Ibid., p. 51.

[19] Ibid., p. 339.

[20] Ibid., p. 18.

[21] Lewis, Rotting Hill, p. [vii].

[22] Lewis, Blasting & Bombardiering, p. 257.

[23] Ibid., p. 257.

[24] Ibid., p. 253.

[25] Ibid., p. 256.

[26] Ibid., p. 258.

Chapter 6

[1] Lewis, Rotting Hill, p. ix.

[2] See Lewis, ibid., p. xi.

[3] Lewis, ibid., pp. 55-56.

[4] Derek Fraser, The Evolution of the British Welfare State, p. 156.

[5] Ibid., p. 156.

[6] L. C. B. Seaman, Post-Victorian Britain 1902-1951, p. 36.

[7] Ibid., p. 36.

[8] Fraser, The Evolution of the British Welfare State, p. 161.

[9] Ibid., p. 161.

[10] Ibid., p. 145.

[11] Alfred F. Havighurst, Twentieth-Century Britain, p. 102.

[12] George Dangerfield, The Strange Death of Liberal England, p. 62.

[13] Ibid., p. 63.

[14] Seaman, Post-Victorian Britain 1902-1951, p. 25.

[15] Dangerfield, The Strange Death of Liberal England, p. 9.

[16] Lord Curzon, quoted in Dangerfield, ibid., p. 52.

[17] Dangerfield, ibid., p. 69.

Chapter 7

[1] Schiff wrote in his first paragraph: "What I meant to convey to you last night when I alluded to my missing a certain political undercurrent in doctrinal or epic poems of philosophic import such as for example 'The Waste Land' and 'The Caliph's Design', was that I feel the need, in work to which I look for illumination, of a certain political orientation. After all, ultimately everything human is referable to a political philosophy of some kind. There may be only a half-conscious drift in one direction or another but a disposition towards one or other form of political organisation must sooner or later declare itself in the work of constructive minds" (Schiff, Letter to Lewis, 9 May 1924).

[2] Lewis, [Note made on the verso of the fourth leaf of a letter addressed to Lewis by Sydney Schiff dated 9 May 1924].

[3] D. G. Bridson, The Filibuster, p. 2.

[4] Robert T. Chapman, Wyndham Lewis, p. 101 and Paul Edwards, "The Apes of God: Form and Meaning," p. 136.

[5] Lewis's opinions concerning the Welfare State are expressed throughout Rotting Hill (1951), a book which, like many of Lewis's works, defies definition. It is ostensibly a collection of short stories, but could perhaps be described more precisely as "conversations on the Welfare State." Lewis sums up his perceptions of England in 1951 at the end of the collection, where he writes: "Lastly, standing by one of the gate-posts, was Britannia. She wore what Yankees call a 'liberty-cap' (hired from Moss Bros.). Once so robust, she was terribly shrunken: some wasting disease, doubtless malignant. The trident now employed as a crutch, she held out a mug for alms. I saw in the mug what looked like a phoney dollar bill, and dropped myself a lucky threepenny bit. I would give my last threepenny bit to poor old silly Britannia. In a cracked wheeze she sang 'Land of Hope and Glory'. I must confess that this last apparition, and its vulgar little song, rather depressed me" (p. 307).

[6] Lewis, Rude Assignment, p. 200.

[7] Lewis, Time and Western Man, p. 13.

[8] Ibid., p. ix.

[9] Ibid., p. ix.

[10] Ibid., pp. 20-21.

[11] Ibid., p. 20.

[12] Ibid., p. 26.

[13] Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, p. 130.

[14] See Lewis, ibid., p. 7.

[15] Lewis, Time and Western Man, p. 26.

[16] Lewis, "Personal Statement," p. 2.

[17] Ibid., p. 2.

[18] Lewis, Hitler, p. 75.

[19] Lewis, Rotting Hill, p. 55.

[20] Ibid., p. viii.

Chapter 8

[1] W. K. Rose, in Lewis, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, p. 140.

[2] Lewis states that the Finnian Shaws' hired waiters are "slovenly-dressed" (Apes, 350/366) and the cutlery and silver set before the guests is "of a quality found in cheap restaurants" (Apes, 352/368).

[3] The observation that Dan Boleyn is a picaro, and individual narrative episodes in the novel picaresque, was first made by Dallas E. Wiebe in "Wyndham Lewis and The Picaresque Novel," in South Atlantic Quarterly (1963).

[4] Lewis, Time and Western Man, p. 116. Paul Edwards recently made an interesting comment on Dan Boleyn's role in the novel, especially in its last chapter: "the character of Dan is in some respects a kind of parody of the reader of this 'unreadable' book[;] . . . his boredom and inattentiveness anticipate a reader's similar reaction. His bewilderment during the strike is a mockery of the plain reader's reception of the last part of the book" ("'The Apes of God': Form and Meaning," p. 146).

[5] R. Page Arnot, The General Strike May 1926, pp. 3-4.

[6] Patrick Renshaw, The General Strike, p. 22.

[7] An informal organization of miners, railwaymen, and transport workers--including dockers--who had agreed to support each other's unions in the event of strikes and trade disputes.

[8] Renshaw, The General Strike, pp. 22-23.

[9] Quoted by Renshaw, ibid., p. 131.

[10] Renshaw, ibid., p. 132.

[11] Ibid., p. 131.

[12] L. S. Amery, quoted in Asa Briggs, compil., They Saw It Happen, p. 382.

[13] Keith Middlemas and John Barnes, Baldwin, p. 378.

[14] Arnot, The General Strike May 1926, p. 4.

[15] Stanley Baldwin, quoted in G. M. Young, Stanley Baldwin, p. 117.

[16] Baldwin, quoted in Arnot, The General Strike May 1926, p. 196.

[17] Arnold Bennett, The Journal of Arnold Bennett, p. 873.

[18] Sir William Joynson-Hicks, Home Secretary 1924-29.

[19] Evelyn Waugh, The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh, p. 253.

[20] In order to avoid a merely simplistic interpretation of this "class-war" one should consider the following statement by Renshaw: "Nor was it simply a war fought between the classes: there were important defections from both sides. Some middle-class people supported the strike. Moreover, the colourful, and more usual, activities of undergraduates and the middle class in trying to break the strike have also helped obscure the fact that an important source of strikebreakers, taking the country as a whole, was the working class--unemployed men glad of the chance to regain some tattered traces of self-respect with a few days' work, strikers from one trade ready to work at another job in another town for a change, working men who, when the crunch came, feared the power of organised labour and rallied to the Government side. Without them it is doubtful if the General Strike could have been broken as quickly as it was" (The General Strike, p. 187).

[21] Bennett, The Journal of Arnold Bennett, p. 873.

[22] A. J. P. Taylor, quoted in Renshaw, The General Strike, p. 187.

[23] Bennett, The Journal of Arnold Bennett, p. 874.

[24] Osbert Sitwell, Laughter in the Next Room, p. 228.

[25] Waugh, The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh, p. 327.

[26] Ibid., p. 327.

[27] Osbert Sitwell, Laughter in the Next Room, p. 228.

[28] Ibid., p. 232.

[29] Ibid., p. 231.

[30] Ibid., p. 230.

[31] Ibid., p. 230.

[32] Ibid., p. 232.

[33] Ibid., p. 232.

[34] Ibid., pp. 228-29.

[35] See Sitwell, ibid., pp. 248-52.

[36] "Cabinet Conclusions," quoted in Renshaw, The General Strike, p. 216.

[37] Renshaw, ibid., p, 216.

[38] John Pepper, The General Strike and the General Betrayal, p. 64.

[39] Renshaw, The General Strike, p. 216.

[40] John Bromley, quoted in Renshaw, ibid., p. 217.

[41] Renshaw, ibid., p. 219.

[42] Ibid., p. 219.

[43] Ibid., p. 219.

[44] Ibid., p. 223. The last statement in this passage is quoted from Osbert Sitwell's Laughter in the Next Room.

[45] Ibid., p. 224.

[46] Ibid., pp. 224-25.

[47] Ernest Bevin, quoted in Renshaw, ibid., p. 225.

[48] Renshaw, ibid., p. 225.

[49] Ibid., p. 225.

[50] The reasons for the retreat and surrender of the T.U.C. general council were manifold and complex. They included the Government's absolute refusal to negotiate, the development of a shift in public support subsequent to Baldwin's effective exploitation (via the B.B.C.) of the idea that the strike represented a direct threat to constitutional government, apprehension about possible outbreaks of violence, and fear that the strikers would be influenced at local levels by left-wing extremists.

[51] Renshaw, The General Strike, p. 221.

[52] T. O. Lloyd, Empire to Welfare State, p. 144.

[53] Lewis, The Art of Being Ruled, p. 128.

[54] Lewis, Rude Assignment, p. 33.

[55] Lewis, Blasting & Bombardiering, p. 85.

[56] Lewis, [Dust-wrapper blurb for the first edition of The Apes of God].

[57] Lewis, The Mysterious Mr. Bull, p. 15.

[58] Ibid., p. 270.

[59] Ibid., p. 167.

[60] Lewis, ["People's Colleges"], p. 6.

[61] Lewis, The Mysterious Mr. Bull, p. 193.

[62] Ibid., p. 105.

[63] Charles Loch Mowat, Britain Between the Wars 1918-1940, p. 284.

[64] Derek Fraser, The Evolution of the British Welfare State, p. 172.

Chapter 9

[1] See Walter Allen, "Lonely Old Volcano," p. 68.

[2] The Morgan influence did not stop with the death of J. Pierpont in 1913. J. P. Morgan Jr. (1867-1943) took over from his father in 1913. Among his involvements in the war years out of which The Apes of God was born were his helping to finance the supply and credit needs of the Allies during the war and his floating of $1,700,000,000 in loans after the war, for the purpose of European reconstruction.

[3] Quoted in Frederick Lewis Allen, The Great Pierpont Morgan, p. 147.

[4] Ibid., p. 141. Of special interest to Lewis would be the fact that in 1906 Morgan hired Roger Fry as the museum's curator of paintings. (Fry's connection with the museum was terminated in 1910.)

[5] Lewis, Blasting & Bombardiering, p. 55.

Chapter 10

[1] Timothy Materer has suggested (in Wyndham Lewis The Novelist, p. 86) that "Dan Boleyn" is evocative of "Anne Boleyn," the ill-fated second wife of Henry VIII. Lewis himself, in a letter to Eliot in 1924 (see The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, p. 141) stated that Boleyn's name was a play on words meant to evoke the name "Dan Bull," presumably a deliberate allusion to John Bull, the nickname for the English plain-man. (The name John Bull had acquired this designation after the publication in 1712, of Dr. John Arbuthnot's satiric The history of John Bull. The name had shortly become a prevalent feature of the English literary consciousness. It was widely used in Victorian caricature. It provided titles for at least four London-based serials founded between 1813 and 1903 and its cliché-status was depended upon by Shaw when he entitled a play he wrote in 1904 John Bull's Other Island.) Lewis himself, in The Apes of God, alluded

directly to the figure of John Bull when he entitled a sub-section of the lenten party chapter "Now Jonathan Bell was an old John Bull." Jonathan Bell, who makes only a fleeting appearance in The Apes of God, comes to Lord Osmund's party dressed "as the figure of Democracy" (Apes, 547/570). Lewis uses him, like Dan Boleyn, to demonstrate what he saw as the unfortunate mental dullness and political vulnerability of "this innocent Democrat" (Apes, 548/571). The figure of John Bull continued to interest Lewis long after he created Dan Boleyn and Jonathan Bell. When in 1938 he made an elaborate attempt to define the essential nature of the English plainman in The Mysterious Mr. Bull, he reiterated an observation that accounted for the nature of his peculiarly caricatured portraits of a decade earlier, of characters like Boleyn, Bell, and even Satterthwaite. In The Mysterious Mr. Bull he wrote matter-of-factly: "There is no sophist, however talented, who could confute the generally accepted opinion as to the stupidity of John Bull. His mental processes are sluggish, and he sees things through a flattering veil of sentiment. That must be allowed. It can be explained--it can even be praised. . . . But it cannot be disproved" (p. 121).

[2] Lewis, [Notes, clippings, "epiphanies," and fragments of conversation utilized in the preparation of The Apes of God].

[3] Robert T. Chapman, Wyndham Lewis, p. 103.

[4] Philip J. Lanthier, "Vision and Satire in the Art and Fiction of Wyndham Lewis," p. 134.

[5] Quoted in Meyers, "The Quest for Wyndham Lewis," p. 75.

[6] Firbank's own involvement in the world of gossip-column fiction is discussed by Brigid Brophy, who in her book on Firbank states that he had figured as Lambert Orme in Harold Nicolson's "book of semi-fiction," Some People (see Brophy, Prancing Novelist, p. 107). Firbank himself caricatured Rupert Brooke as Winsome Brookes in his novel Vainglory (1915). Moreover, Brophy states: "for the United-States edition Firbank planned (but he repented before his plan got into print) to caricature Sacheverell Sitwell in the same stroke by renaming the character Sacheverell Brookes" (p. 99). Miriam J. Benkovitz, commenting in the same vein, relates that in Firbank's novel, The Flower Beneath the Foot (1923), "'Princess Elsie'= Princess Mary. 'Mrs Chilleywater'=Mrs. Harold Nicholson. 'Eddy'= Evan Morgan . . . [etc.]" (Benkovitz, A Bibliography of Ronald Firbank, p. 39.)

[7] After the war Lewis became one of Firbank's circle of acquaintances, which was at that time "wide and heterogeneous, and included such personalities as the Sitwells" (Jocelyn Brooke, Ronald Firbank, p. 42). Lewis's portrait of Firbank was completed in 1922 and was published (along with a portrait drawing by Augustus John) in Firbank's novel, The Flower beneath the Foot (1923). It is reproduced in Walter Michel's Wyndham Lewis: Paintings and Drawings, Plate 59. (Other

apes who sat for Lewis portraits that year included Richard Wyndham, Edith, Osbert, and Sacheverell Sitwell, Sydney Schiff and Violet Schiff.

[8] Jocelyn Brooke, Ronald Firbank, pp. 34-35.

[9] Ibid., p. 35.

[10] Augustus John, quoted in Osbert Sitwell's "Introduction" to Ronald Firbank's Five Novels, p. xxi.

[11] Lewis, Blasting & Bombardiering, p. 225. Later in his account Lewis states that Firbank "flushed so much . . . and then went so pale, I was afraid he might faint" (p. 226). Dan Boleyn actually does faint and falls from the throne.

[12] Lewis, Blasting & Bombardiering, pp. 225-26.

[13] Osbert Sitwell in his "Introduction" to Ronald Firbank, Five Novels, p. xx.

Chapter 11

[1] Robert Chapman, in an article entitled "The 'Enemy' versus Bloomsbury," states: "Between 1911 and 1914, when Bloomsbury was forming, Lewis was friendly with several members of the incipient group. He knew Adrian Stephen, Virginia Woolf's brother, with whom he stayed in France; he visited Gertrude Stein accompanied by Roger Fry and he exhibited at the Second Post-Impressionist Exhibition at the Grafton Galleries in October 1912, the show being organized by Fry with Leonard Woolf as secretary" (p. 81). There were some among the Bloomsburies who had, however, disliked Lewis from the start. As early as 1907 Duncan Grant wrote of him to Lytton Strachey: "'my gorge simply rises whenever I see him . . . I simply descend into the depths of gloom . . . and I cannot decide whether my feelings are absurd and silly, but I certainly think all his hopelessly mesquine and putrid'" (quoted in Cork, Vorticism, 1, 7). Strachey himself, although he admired what he called Lewis's "fiendish observation, and very original ideas" (Lytton Strachey, quoted in Holroyd, Lytton Strachey, p. 519) (demonstrated in the Bestre story), recorded at the same time (in a 1912 letter to Ottoline Morrell) this response to the story's author: "Yet the whole thing was most disagreeable; the subtlety was curiously crude, and the tone all through more mesquin than can be described. . . . Ugh! the total effect was affreux. Living in the company of such a person would certainly have a deleterious influence on one's moral being. All the same I should like to see more of his work—though not his paintings . . ."(Lytton Strachey, quoted in Holroyd, Lytton Strachey, p. 519).

[2] In an unpublished typescript, "Say it With Leaves!," Lewis states: "Cambridge and 'Bloomsbury' are indissolubly wedded as expressions, for the purposes of the careful historian: between that university and the W. C. district there has always been the closest connection--it would have been impossible to predict of any young man who formerly went up to Cambridge that he would not become 'a Bloomsbury' before he was through . . ." (pp. 19-20).

[3] Lewis, Tarr (1918), pp. 17-18.

[4] That Lewis's action of leaving the Omega was, in effect, an act affecting a group or coterie rather than an individual is demonstrated in the correspondence sent from Vanessa Bell to Roger Fry immediately after Lewis's circulation of his "Round Robin." There Vanessa Bell alludes to the involvement of several Bloomsbury associates in the affair. The people she mentions specifically include Molly MacCarthy, Desmond MacCarthy, Duncan Grant, Adrian Stephen, Clive Bell, and Leonard Woolf. (See Bell and Chaplin, "The Ideal Home Rumpus," pp. 289-290.) The involvement of Maynard Keynes is recorded in a letter from Duncan Grant to Fry. (See Bell and Chaplin, pp. 290-291.)

[5] John Rothenstein, in Modern English Painters, writes the following of Fry: "One of Fry's marked characteristics was an innate hatred of what was smooth, facile or mechanical. . . . [This] led him to persuade his artist friends to exaggerate the irregularities which characterize the hand-made object. Exaggerated irregularity, a touch, even, of wilful clumsiness [was] suggestive of the intelligent and sensitive amateur beloved by Fry . . ." (p. 294).

[6] Lewis, Wyndham Lewis on Art, p. 58.

[7] Ibid., p. 199.

[8] Fry was, at various times in his career, director of the Metropolitan Museum of New York, regular art critic for the Athenaeum, and editor of the Burlington Magazine. He had a considerable reputation as an expert on the visual arts and is described in the concise Dictionary of National Biography as "the greatest influence on taste since Ruskin."

[9] Walter Michel, in a note in Wyndham Lewis on Art, says: "Fry pointedly ignored the struggling English painters, and he seems to have made no objections to Bell's putting them down. A few examples of these attacks, often indirect and veiled, delivered with an infuriating smugness, from impregnable positions of power and prestige, are given in my book on the painting of Wyndham Lewis. To them, there was no effective answer. All one could do was to strike back, which Lewis, on occasion, did" (p. 103).

[10] The quotation draws attention to Fry's Victorianism. In The Tyro, No. 1 Lewis states unequivocally his position vis à vis Fry and the Victorians: "One of the anomalies in the more experimental section of English painting, is that a small group of people which is of almost purely eminent Victorian origin, saturated with William Morris's prettiness and fervour, 'Art for Art's sake', late Victorianism, the direct descendants of Victorian England--I refer to the Bloomsbury painters--are those who are apt to act most as mediators between people working here and the Continent. . . . Mr. Roger Fry . . . is their honoured leader" (Lewis, Wyndham Lewis on Art, p. 198).

[11] Lewis, Wyndham Lewis on Art, p. 199.

[12] Ibid., p. 199.

[13] Lewis, "Say it With Leaves!," p. 8.

[14] Ibid., p. 9.

[15] Ibid., p. 13.

[16] Ibid., p. [10a].

[17] Ibid., p. 11.

[18] Ibid., pp. 20-21.

[19] Lewis, "Editorial," The Tyro, No. 2, p. 9.

[20] Ibid., p. 16.

[21] Ibid., p. 15.

[22] Fisher, quoted in Holroyd, Lytton Strachey, p. 398.

[23] Beaton, quoted in Holroyd, Lytton Strachey, p. 853.

[24] Holroyd, Lytton Strachey, p. 641.

[25] According to Holroyd, Carrington figured as the model for other contemporary fictional characters: Ethel Cane in D. H. Lawrence's short story "None of That" and the "pink and childish" Mary Bracegirdle in Huxley's Crome Yellow (Lytton Strachey, p. 638).

[26] Holroyd, Lytton Strachey, p. 633.

[27] Ibid., p. 649.

[28] Ibid., pp. 648-49.

[29] Ibid., p. 649.

[30] Among the notes and fragments preserved at Cornell are phrases which are, presumably, discarded titles of chapters or of the novel itself: "In an Apery" and "Daniel in the Ape's den." (See Lewis, [Notes, clippings, "epiphanies," and fragments of conversation utilized in the preparation of The Apes of God] at Cornell.)

Chapter 12

[1] Thus, Dick Whittingdon, in The Apes of God, was a step-grandson (so to speak) to the Sib.

[2] See W. K. Rose's comments in The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, p. 145.

[3] In Blasting & Bombardiering Lewis introduces Wyndham as "the nephew of the distinguished late-Victorian dilettante, George Wyndham--and so a descendant . . . of the famous Lord Egremont, who was the patron of Turner, and a great name in the world of painting" (p. 233). It is interesting to note, in passing, that Richard Wyndham's uncle, George (from whom he inherited the family estate), was among the "ditchers" (see p. 76) during the Parliament Bill debate that "meant the death of aristocracy" in 1911 (Dangerfield, The Strange Death of Liberal England, p. 70).

[4] See Lewis, Letter to Fanny Wadsworth, [16 April 1924].

[5] Ibid.

[6] Lewis, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, p. 142. (Ellipses are W. K. Rose's.)

[7] See W. K. Rose's comments in Lewis, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, p. 143.

[8] See Lewis, [Broadsides concerning reaction to The Apes of God].

[9] Richard Wyndham, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, [April 1924].

[10] Wyndham sailed to New York in 1925. His primary purpose was to dispose of an immense John A. Sargent portrait of his three aunts entitled "The Wyndham Sisters" (1899). He sold the painting to the Metropolitan Museum of Art for around $100,000. Having received some casual lessons in painting from Lewis, he was determined to practice his craft abroad: while in New York he took a studio at the Berkeley. (See Obsert Sitwell, Queen Mary and Others, pp. 100, 103.)

[11] Lewis's attitude toward such impromptu exhibiting of his works is expressed in a letter to Ezra Pound, dated 11 June 1925: "Recently a painter--who I daresay is a friend of yours, as I understand you see a number of people from England in your italian home--came to ask me to contribute something to a show he, Wadsworth, Nash and other people were getting up. I did not wish to exhibit with him or with his friends at all, although the advertisement they would derive from exhibiting with me would be very attractive to them no doubt: for some of them had proved that in the past. I said I did not want to exhibit at the moment which was also true. He said he was sorry, and went away. When the show opened, in the middle of the wall hung a large coloured drawing of mine which Wadsworth had sold to the Gallery, or put into Sothebys, where it could conveniently be bought. . . . I am sorry to have seemed to have afforded the world precedent for such treatment of an artist" (Lewis, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, p. 159).

[12] Richard Wyndham, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, "Thursday." Lewis's reply includes an explanation about the manuscript Wyndham spoke of. It was that of "The Man of the World," which, Lewis explained, had been cut up and portions "transformed and embodied to some extent in other works." Lewis invites Wyndham to come round at his convenience: "we shall no doubt he able to arrive at some understanding satisfactory to you" (Lewis, Letter to Richard Wyndham [draft],[27 April] 1924).

[13] See Lewis's letters to Drey in The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, pp. 162-64.

[14] Marjorie Firminger, "No Quarter," p. 1.

[15] Firminger , Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 19 April 1931.

[16] Firminger, "No Quarter," p. 11.

[17] Ibid., p. 16.

[18] Ibid., p. 16.

[19] Ibid., p. 17.

[20] Ibid., p. 43.

[21] Firminger, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, [June 1930: "I have just . . ."].

[22] Firminger, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, [1930: "this morning . . . "].

[23] Firminger, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, [1930: "I sent my book . . ."].

[24] Firminger, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, [June 1930: "Edward came here . . ."].

[25] John Rothenstein, Modern English Painters, p. 396.

[26] Richard Wyndham, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, [192-?].

[27] That Richard Wyndham was indeed a collector of whips has been confirmed by Peter Quennell, who knew him, in a letter to the author.

[28] See Peter Quennell, Letter to Hildegard Tieseen, 12 March 1979.

[29] Richard Wyndham, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, "Thursday."

[30] Lewis, [Broadsides concerning reaction to The Apes of God].

[31] Lewis, Blasting & Bombardiering, p. 233.

[32] Ibid., pp. 233-34.

Chapter 13

[1] Osbert Sitwell, Queen Mary and Others, pp. 104-5.

[2] In fact, Wagner's discussion of The Apes of God demonstrates his lack of attention to the details of the text. He carelessly misreads when he says: "Ratner goes to Lord Osmund's party in a fancy-dress costume filled with associations all detestable to Lewis. . . . 'My very fly-buttons are allusive,' he says proudly to himself, looking in the mirror at this get-up" (Wagner, p. 172). It is, of course, Zagreus who wears the costume and speaks these lines.

[3] Geoffrey Wagner, Wyndham Lewis, p. 171.

[4] See page proofs and bound set of page proofs in the Lewis collection at S.U.N.Y.A.B. These are dated in ink in the top left corner of the respective first pages: 12/3/30 and 6.3.30.

[5] Lewis's allusions to Joycean fiction are not in conflict with the identity of the real-life Ratner, whose own fiction reveals the strong influence of Joyce and whose career, it will be noted further on in the text of this thesis, intersected--in a significant way--that of Joyce's at various points during the 1920s.

[6] Anon. "Classic Inhumanism," Times Literary Supplement, 2 August 1957, p. 466.

[7] Wagner, "Classic Inhumanism," Times Literary Supplement, 30 August 1957, p. 519.

[8] Robert T. Chapman, Wyndham Lewis, p. 102.

[9] Jeffrey Meyers, The Enemy, p. 140. Meyers' judgement has recently been refuted in Paul Edwards' review, "The New Lewis Biography" (1980). Edwards' assessment is in keeping with that of the anonymous Times Literary Supplement reviewer; his argument and conclusion parallel those developed independently in this dissertation. He writes: "Ratner is of course modelled on John Rodker, who published Fifteen Drawings but also The Lay of Maldoror (advertised in The Tyro, No. 2). He appears also to have been behind The Casanova Society. . . . [H]ence Ratner is presented as a publisher of pornography in expensive editions. He contributed to both issues of The Tyro, and, like Ratner, was Jewish. . . . [T]he Joycean element in Ratner is due to Lewis's view of Rodker as an imitator of Joyce, and hence an 'ape of God'" (p. [3]).

[10] Among these were the portraits of Edith Sitwell (1922) and Violet Schiff (1923-24) and drawings of Edward Wadsworth (1920), Richard Wyndham (1922), Sacheverell and Osbert Sitwell (1922), Sydney Schiff (1922-23) and John Rodker (1923).

[11] Lewis, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, p. 141.

[12] Lewis, [Typescript of The Apes of God, extensively corrected and revised], p. 12.

[13] Rupert Grayson, Stand Fast, the Holy Ghost, p. 133.

[14] See typescript of The Apes of God at S.U.N.Y.A.B. (Buffalo) from which this statement is crossed out.

[15] "It will be recalled that at the start I intimated that this essay was to be an attempt to provide something in the nature of a philosophy of the eye. That description of it in the present connection, however, it could be claimed, is the opposite of the truth. Or rather, it would be the opposite of the truth if you wish to isolate the Eye. For it is against that isolation that we contend" (Time and Western Man, p. 403). "It is our contention here that it is because of the subjective disunity due to the separation, or separate treatment, of the senses, principally of sight and of touch, that the external disunity has been achieved. It is but another case of the morcellement of the one personality, in this case into a tactile-observer on the one hand and a visual-observer on the other, giving different renderings of the same thing. Its results must be the disintegration, finally, of any 'public' thing at all" (Time and Western Man, p. 405).

[16] An obituary tribute to Rodker in The Times (11 October 1955), one of the few published reminiscences of the man, includes the following comments by a former friend, Professor J. Isaacs: "The sudden death last week of John Rodker . . . . severs yet one more link with the literary world of the 1920s. He began as one of that brilliant East London group which included the painters Mark Gertler

and David Bomberg. . . . With his friend Ezra Pound as sponsor he moved . . . to the *Egoist* group. . . . He published the drawings of Wyndham Lewis, contributed to Lewis's *The Tyro*, and was rewarded by inclusion in *The Apes of God*. . . . He was a gentle person, who gave to publishing what should have been given to literature, yet in his contribution towards the reputations of Eliot, Pound, Joyce, Lewis, and Freud, he was a not unimportant part of our time."

[17] Nancy Cunard, *These Were the Hours*, p. 141. Later in her memoir, Nancy Cunard quotes a reviewer for the *Times* who called Rodker a "representative of the modern nerve-wracked generation" (p. 146).

[18] Ibid., p. 141.

[19] Ibid., p. 142.

[20] Of the latter, 250 copies were announced, but, according to Will Ransom's *Private Presses and Their Books* "not more than 50 were issued" (p. 374).

[21] Rodker's work--mostly poetry, occasionally a review--appeared at least thirty times in *The Little Review* between 1917 and 1922. The fact that his work was not published in that magazine in the later years could be partially explained by an editorial comment on page 63 of the final issue (May 1929): "When Pound repudiated the Anglo-Saxon peoples and left England for France he gave us Rodker (1920-1921). Rodker and the Little Review never seemed to understand each other."

[22] In *The Diabolical Principle and The Dithyrambic Spectator*, Lewis, with typical aplomb, describes Lautréamont as a "kind of happy mixture of the Marquis de Sade and Frederick Nietzsche, but without remarkable talent" (p. 50).

[23] Rodker's translation of *The Lay of Maldoror* was serialized in five segments (August-December 1922) in *Broom* (1921-24).

[24] The appearance of Rodker's name as part of the colophon of the first edition of *Ulysses* came as a surprise to the directors of The Egoist Press, according to Jane Lidderdale, who in her biography of Harriet Shaw Weaver remarks that Rodker's assigned role *vis à vis* Joyce's novel had been that of business manager, not publisher. He was, she states, to be: "responsible for all dealings with the printer, for holding the bulk stocks, for supplying the Egoist office and Miss Beach, and for handling all other orders. For this work, he was given a 'commission' of £250 and was entitled to charge his expenses--travel, postage, freight--to The Egoist Press" (*Dear Miss Weaver*, p. 204). But if Rodker's assignment had been confused, his intentions regarding *Ulysses* had been made clear (to some people, at least) as early as August 1920, when Ezra Pound wrote to Joyce, whom Rodker had just met: "[Rodker] offers to give an

imprint to Ulysses if the Egoist will provide the £ for the actual printing somewhere else . . ."(Pound, The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941, p. 155). Lewis's statement in "The Diabolical Principle" that Rodker (identified simply as the translator of "The Lay of Maldoror") is "a gentleman rather similar to Roth" may allude to what some people seem to have regarded as the illegitimacy of Rodker's having pushed himself to the forefront as publisher of Ulysses. The "Roth" whom Lewis refers to was the literary pirate, Samuel Roth, who in his little magazine, Two Worlds Monthly (1926-27), based in New York, published unauthorized installments of Ulysses. On the surface, Rodker's connection with Roth is simply by virtue of the fact that each man was what Lewis (euphemistically, in the case of Roth) refers to as a "sagacious literary reprint-publisher." (See Lewis, The Diabolical Principle and The Dithyrambic Spectator, p. 56.)

[25] Jolas wrote: "In Lautréamont, who, with magnificent courage chose to hymn the satanic, we find the gnostic philosophy transmuted into pure poetry" (quoted in D. McMillan, transition, p. 31).

[26] In a 1927 letter to his father, Ezra Pound commented on Adolphe 1920: "As to the Rodker: I rather think he gets more into the 90 pages (that makes the complete nouvelle) than most novelists get into 300" (The Letters of Ezra Pound 1907-1941, p. 211). Pound's recommendations of Rodker's work are scattered throughout his letters to literary friends from 1914 at least until 1933. In 1917 he wrote Margaret Anderson, stating that Rodker "will go farther than Richard Aldington, though I don't expect anyone to believe that statement for some time. He has more invention, more guts . . ." (p. 122).

[27] Winifred Henderson was a co-manager with Desmond Harmsworth of the small press which issued the first edition of Lewis's Enemy of the Stars (Desmond Harmsworth, 1932). She was with Harmsworth, also, when Lewis, in April 1932, approached them to publish The Roaring Queen. (See Morrow and Lafourcade, A Bibliography of the Writings of Wyndham Lewis, pp. 71, 112.)

[28] Winifred Henderson is referred to (as "Wyn") on several occasions in the 1930 letters of Marjorie Firminger to Lewis. Firminger had come to know her through Elliott Seabrooke, the painter and actor who rented the upper floor of the maisonette she occupied. Seabrooke was associated with Nancy Cunard's circle; he was a cover designer for Hours Press books. (He knew Lewis casually and it was through Seabrooke that Lewis and Firminger became acquainted in the late spring or early summer of 1929.) In June 1930, Firminger, who had completed a pornographic novel entitled Jam To-day, submitted the typescript of her book (which had already been rejected by several publishers) to Wyn Henderson for consideration at the Aquila Press. She wrote to Lewis (whom she had shown excerpts from the novel as early as March) describing Henderson's reaction to her work: "I met Wyn at Elliott's & have given her my book of letters, with a copy of the lesbian bit you read. . . . She read it & said she was impressed!

& would read the book this week & discuss it with Nancy who arrives on Tuesday. . . . I shouldn't think that either of them will do it, however. The Aquilla has gone bust for the moment anyway--no money at all" (8 June 1930). A few days later, in an undated letter that begins, "I have just bought 'The Apes of God.' I pawned something to do it . . . ", Firminger related to Lewis Winifred Henderson's response to Jam To-day: "Elliott told me on the telephone this morning that Wyn & Nancy are very angry indeed at what I have written about them & thats all they will say about the book. So I sent it back today. Elliott saw them last evening, & he seems to think that they are quite right in thinking that I should have told Wyn first that I'd mentioned them. . . . I don't suppose you ever got to the two characters they took to be themselves--I mentioned a Miss Wikk who owned a book shop backed by a sausage millionaire & raped her way about literary London, & Wyn is furious. She would hardly speak to me on the telephone when I asked for the book back. . . . (She'd gushed over the lesbian bit last week, actually said that I might be the woman for whom they were looking--the female Casanova!). I told her I'd send for it at once, & did." Firminger kept Lewis informed about the fate of her manuscript, for he, after seeing the typescript in the spring, had suggested that she send the book (which he himself regarded, she acknowledged, as an example of "highschoolgirlish titter" [Lewis, quoted in Firminger's letter to him, 4 July 1930]), to Donald Friede of Covici Friede in New York or Edward Titus of the Black Maniken Press in Paris (see Firminger, "No Quarter," pp. 39, 58). As it turned out, Friede refused the manuscript in September on the grounds, according to Firminger, that "with the details it could not be sold, & without them it would not sell" (Letter to Lewis, 7 September 1930). Firminger never managed to contact Titus, but approached instead David Clarke of the Vendome Press in Paris who in mid-September 1930 accepted the novel for publication. Clarke, Firminger recalls in her memoir, was sorry that he had just turned down an opportunity to publish a cheap edition of Lady Chatterley's Lover when she offered him her manuscript and was now determined to publish "the next hot stuff novel that came along" ("No Quarter," p. 64). Jam To-day was published in time for Christmas 1930.

[29] Richard Aldington, A Passionate Prodigality, pp. 37-38.

[30] Iris Barry, quoted in Charles Norman, Ezra Pound, p. 197.

[31] Sylvia Beach, Shakespeare and Company, p. 113.

[32] Lewis, [Typescript of The Apes of God, extensively corrected and revised], part iv, p. 5.

[33] Ibid., part iv, p. 5.

[34] Ibid., part iv, p. 6.

[35] Geoffrey Wagner, Wyndham Lewis, p. 172.

[36] Lewis, [Typescript of *The Apes of God* . . .], part iv, p. 5.

[37] Horst Woldemar Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, p. 19.

[38] The fact that passages like the following are not present in the original version of "Mr. Zagreus and the Split-Man," illustrates the degree to which the Ratner/Zagreus relationship (in its final form) is defined by the former's *financial* services rather than by his usefulness as minor demon or magician's helper: "'*Have I the money*? No--*I haven't*. I'd kick the door down the filthy devil! . . . *He* knows the buck-ger--when I go in he'll ask me if I've got the money'" (*Apes*, 327/[343]).

[39] "The Diabolical Principle" first appeared in *The Enemy* No. 3 (25 January 1929), pp. 9-84. The essay reappeared in 1931 as the first part of *The Diabolical Principle and The Dithyrambic Spectator* (a book which had been accepted for publication by Charles Prentice for Chatto & Windus on 6 December 1928. (See Bradford Morrow & Bernard Lafourcade, *A Bibliography of the Writings of Wyndham Lewis*, p. 63.)

[40] Lewis, *The Diabolical Principle and The Dithyrambic Spectator*, p. 76.

[41] Ibid., p. 62.

[42] Ibid., p. 77.

[43] Ibid., p. 125.

Chapter 14

[1] Marjorie Firminger, "No Quarter," p. 14.

[2] Ibid., p. 11 (cited previously, on p. 145).

[3] Ibid., p. 17.

[4] Compare Zagreus's statement: "I have been at great pains to do field-work for Pierpoint and wherever I went [I went] to get that material that he requires" (*Apes*, 408/426). (The syntax of the original is confused; the meaning is made clear by my interpolation.)

[5] Firminger, "No Quarter," pp. 21-22.

[6] Sustained, that is, over a period of about a year and a half, from mid-1929 until the end of May 1931.

[7] Firminger, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, [June 1930]. ["Edward came here . . ."].

[8] Firminger, "No Quarter," pp. 42-43. In her memoir, Firminger describes how a chance meeting with Schiff at a London Group exhibition had given her "the germ" for a chapter in her novel, Jam To-day. Schiff, whom she re-named "Parl," appears in that pornographic "book of girl-to-girl letters" (Firminger, "No Quarter," p. 13) as a man "busy writing a book on the lines of Proust" (Jam To-day, p. 26). He is a lionizing amateur who entertains "anyone who does anything or is supposed to be very modern. He's a little scared of the modern craze running away with him. He thinks he's started the movement so well, you see, by doing gradually what most people do too quickly. His furniture is modern, but not too modern. We're going to buy more in Paris on the way back. 'Dim, my dear. Dim. They've got the stuff--some of it. But not all. Must give people a chance at home. Let them see what they can do. Know an architect who realises just what I want. Mustn't push it too far,--this modern stuff. Nothing too severe--people won't stand for it. I'm a pioneer--after all. A pioneer.' And he kicks out his feet over an imaginary steel floor round which rear up the last thing in austere walls streaked with such modern pictures--" (Jam To-day, p. 29). Typical of contemporary accounts of Schiff's physical appearance, Firminger's description of him focuses on his precision of dress and movement: "He has a peculiar way of throwing out his legs when he walks in a see-what-an-explorer-I-am sort of way. His feet turn upwards and outwards slightly, and he wears very light tan shoes beautifully punched about. He takes great trouble about his clothes and achieves a slightly military aspect--his moustache curling upwards slightly, like his feet. His shirts are very plain and youthful, cut a little lower in the neck than most, I think, with rather wide Byronic collars. His hair must be dyed, and it's that very even brown black. His whole appearance is one of extreme care--he tries to suggest generations of cultured ease behind him" (Jam To-day, pp. 27-28).

[9] In fact, Firminger's Schiff-character, described in the note above, bears a striking resemblance to Lewis's: "Mr. Lionel Kein appeared in the doorway, smiling like a very knowing polichinelle making his entrance. Then, closing the door behind him with the action of a dog chasing its tail, his thin legs flexing in his ample, striped whip-cord trousers, he advanced towards them with an alert dandified energetic shuffle. He presented now the earnest mask of a beardless, but military-moustachioed, spectacled Dr. Freud" (Apes, 242/255).

[10] See Violet Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 29 April 1924.

[11] This sum includes A True Story (1930), which is primarily a gathering and condensation of three novels published earlier: Richard Kurt (1919), Prince Hempseed (1923), and Elinor Colhouse (1921).

[12] For further insight into the Schiff-Muir relationship see Muir's letters to Schiff in Edwin Muir, Selected Letters of Edwin Muir, pp. 34-108 passim.

[13] Edwin Muir, "Prince Hempseed," p. 621. Muir, on discovering Schiff's age, wrote to him in June 1924: "I had not thought you were 57!" He had envisioned Schiff (whom he addressed as Stephen Hudson) as "between 40 and 50" (Edwin Muir, Selected Letters, p. 39).

[14] Muir seems to have won his place in The Apes of God not simply because Lewis regarded his laudatory reviews of Schiff's work as disproportionate (the work which Muir praised as having qualities "more incontestable than those of any other novelist of our time" [Muir, "Stephen Hudson," p. 662], Lewis described, in the words of Pierpoint and Zagreus in the novel, as "'the last extremity of maudlin decay . . . the last pitiable success of the ancien régime'" [Apes, 242/254]), but undoubtedly also because Muir, who reviewed regularly for influential literary magazines, preferred to resist Schiff's frequent suggestions that he write an essay on the fiction of Wyndham Lewis.

After seeing the review of Prince Hempseed, Schiff wrote to Muir to express his gratitude and to introduce him to his other novels, copies of which he forwarded to him: Richard Kurt (1919), Elinor Colhouse (1921), and Tony (1924). Willa Muir, in her memoir, Belonging (1968), recalls that Schiff, moreover, "was so pleased and tickled by the innocent tribute that he began a friendly correspondence with Edwin which opened a new line of communication with England" (p. 110). Schiff's enthusiastic embrace of his admirer was perceived with relentless ironic humour by Lewis (see Apes, 302/316-17), who regarded the liaison between writer and critic as yet another expression of the log-rolling activity that seemed to him to dominate the arena of literary journalism at the time.

In fact, Schiff and Muir had begun a friendship in 1924 that was to continue--punctuated as it was by letters one to the other--over fifteen years at least. The subject matter of their correspondence was mainly academic and included, in the early years, frequent discussions of Lewis's work, in which Schiff hoped to interest Muir. (See Edwin Muir, Selected Letters of Edwin Muir, pp. 34-108.) Schiff had in fact successfully persuaded his critic-friend to read "Bestre," "Cantleman's Spring Mate," and part of Tarr before arranging for Muir to meet Lewis in July 1924. The meeting was not a happy one. (See Willa Muir, Belonging, pp. 120-21.) A few days after the unfortunate encounter, on 29 July, Schiff wrote to Lewis, confident of having aroused Muir's interest, stating that it was Muir's intention to read all he could obtain of Lewis's work in order to write a critical study of it. He requested that Lewis send him "copies of any critical articles on [his] work which seem[ed] to [him] perceptive" (Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 29 July 1924), along with copies of "The Ideal Giant," "The Caliph's Design," Blast, and "A Soldier of Humour," so that he could forward them to Muir in Scotland. Furthermore, while Muir was laying final plans for a series of articles dealing "with those younger authors of today who are in the process of becoming established" (Anon., [Editorial note], *Nation*, p. [661]), Schiff wrote to him (possibly with Lewis's prompting) to ask Muir if the cluster of essays would include one on Lewis's work. Muir responded with a lengthy assessment of the artist he refused to review. It began: "About Lewis I have never come to satisfactory conclusions; except unconsciously, where I know I dislike him" (Muir, *Selected Letters of Edwin Muir*, p. 50). When during several weeks in the latter part of 1925 and the beginning of 1926 Muir's series was published, it included essays on the work of D. H. Lawrence, Edith Sitwell, James Joyce, Lytton Strachey, T. S. Eliot, Virginia Woolf, Aldous Huxley, and Stephen Hudson (Schiff). The fiction of Schiff was singled out for "its high qualities . . . more incontestable than those of any other novelist of our time" (Muir, "Stephen Hudson," p. [661]).

[15] Walter Allen, in an attempt to establish a place for the novels of Stephen Hudson, devotes a few pages of his *Tradition and Dream* (1964) to them, saying they are "novels of real distinction" (p. 53). Similarly, Martin Seymour-Smith, the outspoken author of the *Guide to Modern World Literature* (1973), states that Schiff's fiction "deserves to be remembered" (p. 212).

[16] Sydney Schiff died in 1944 at 76 years of age. His wife, Violet, eight years his junior, died after a lengthy fight with a debilitating illness, in 1962. Between 1952 and 1957 she edited Louise de Vilmorin's *Julietta* (1952) (translated by Alison Brothers) and translated three French novels: Raymond Radiguet's *Count d'Orgel Opens the Ball* (1952), Jean Louis Curtis's *The Silken Ladder* (1957) (translated with her nephew, also an acquaintance of Lewis's, Edward Beddington Behrens) and André Maurois's *The Climates of Love* (1957) (translated with Esme Cook). It is interesting to find that Violet Schiff exercised her own literary talents after her husband's death; in *The Apes of God* Zagreus contends that Isabel Kein collaborates on, (in fact writes "with Li's tremulous assistance") Lionel's books (*Apes*, 303/317).

[17] T. S. Eliot, [Obituary Tribute to Violet Schiff], p. 18.

[18] Jack Isaacs, quoted in Edward Beddington Behrens, *Look Back-Look Forward*, pp. [58]-59.

[19] G. W. A. [Obituary Tribute to Sydney Schiff], p. 6f. Consistent with his wealth and his commitment to the cultural world, Schiff gave an enormous dinner party in Paris, after the premier of Stravinsky's *Renard* in 1922. Present, along with Stravinsky and Proust, were Diaghilev, Picasso, and Joyce, whom Schiff wanted Proust to meet. This, presumably, was the meeting that Margaret Anderson, in her autobiography, *My Thirty Years' War* (1930) recalled as the subject of an anecdote James Joyce once told her: "Some friends were eager that he [Joyce] and Marcel Proust should meet. They arranged a dinner, assured that the two men would have much to say to each other. The host [presumably Schiff] tried to start them off. I regret that I don't know Mr. Joyce's work, said Proust. I have never read Mr.

Proust, said Joyce. And that was the extent of their communication" (p. 245).

[20] Schiff, under the name Stephen Hudson, wrote "A Portrait" for this volume.

[21] Before ever having met the French author, he dedicated Richard Kurt to him in 1919.

[22] C. K. Scott Moncrieff, Marcel Proust, p. 2.

[23] Lewis, Time and Western Man, p. 10.

[24] Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 21 March 1927. Lewis's answer to Schiff's argument is not among the Schiff papers in The British Library, and so the nature of his response can only be guessed at from the contents of Schiff's next letter (18 April 1927) in which he discusses Proust's snobbishness and the part-Semitic background he, Schiff, shares with the French writer.

[25] He wrote: "If you deny the creative intelligence to Proust, it seems to me you must include in that category all artists who rely upon personal experience of life for their material. . . . The reciprocal roles of memory and imagination are not susceptible to definition or identification. Does memory play a greater part in imagination or vice versa? How much of memory is there in Gulliver's travels, how much of imagination in Ivan Ilytch?" (Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 21 March 1927).

[26] Anne Wyndham Lewis, quoted in Bernard Lafourcade, "Chere Mrs. Lewis," p. 17.

[27] Marjorie Firminger, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, [June 1930]. ["Edward came here . . ."].

[28] That Schiff very likely had written to Lewis prior to this--and since the publication of The Apes of God--is suggested by the opening of his letter, which says: "It is rather discouraging to write to you because you don't answer" (Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 8 April 1931).

[29] Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 8 April 1931.

[30] Jane Lidderdale and Mary Nicholson, Dear Miss Weaver, p. 175.

[31] Lewis, Letter to Violet Schiff, 5 September 1922. It is interesting once more to note that Lewis wrote to Violet in this vein about Sydney's novel, especially in light of Zagreus's comments, in The Apes of God, about the real authorship of Kein's fiction: "it is she who writes his books rather than Lionel himself. I do not mean she writes them--Lionel is her medium--he writes them, she is the all pervasive editor" (Apes, 305/320).

[32] Schiff paid Lewis £130 when he commissioned him to paint a portrait of Violet Schiff in 1921. The painting was begun in December of that year. On several occasions over the next few years, Schiff asked Lewis to deliver the work. As late as the end of March 1929 the Schiffs had still not received it, and it remained incomplete at least until early 1933, when Lewis wrote, in February, to Schiff, stating that he was planning to "do anything further to Violet's portrait that occurs to me when I next find myself in front of it" (Lewis, Letter to Sydney Schiff, 20 February 1933).

[33] The correspondence that has been preserved at Cornell consists almost exclusively of letters received--rather than those sent--by Lewis. A number of the letters written from Lewis to Schiff (forty-one in all) are among the Schiff papers in The British Library. Even though their dates are scattered between 1922 and 1933, none of these are directly related to the troubles that arose between the two parties in the mid-1920s.

[34] Violet Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 25 February 1924.

[35] In a letter dated 15 November 1924 Schiff questions whether Lewis's resentment had been aroused by the fact that during the four months from 22 November 1923 to 4 April 1924 the Schiffs had failed to buy any of the artist's work. (This had been the longest interval between art purchases since the Schiffs had begun to acquire Lewis's paintings and drawings in November 1920.)

[36] Lewis, "The Apes of God," p. 306. Emphasis mine.

[37] Violet Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 26 April 1924.

[38] Violet Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 29 April 1924. The reference to the pseudo-Proust, though obscure and fleeting, presented a threat to the Schiffs primarily because of the immediate textual context of the allusion in a *fragment* of a larger work. Strongly suggested by the context was the fact that the "pseudo-Proust" would be more fully examined, receive greater illumination, at some later point in the novel from which this excerpt had been drawn. Indeed, the Schiffs were not alone in expressing their uneasiness about the content of the excerpts from Lewis's forthcoming book. Osbert Sitwell, recognizing an allusion to his family as the "family of 'great poets' (each one on a little frail biographical family pedestal" (Lewis, "The Apes of God," p. 306), wrote to Lewis to warn him that his venture into biography in his new book would be tiresome in the extreme and could lead to quarreling.

[39] Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 4 May 1924. Among those whose ire and indignation was aroused by "The Apes of God" segment was Osbert Sitwell, as suggested above. Violet Schiff alluded to the breach between Sitwell and Lewis when she remarked in a letter to Lewis dated 21 May 1924: "I hear from Ada [Ada Leverson, sister to Violet Schiff and close friend of Osbert Sitwell: named "the Sphinx" by her friend Oscar Wilde, she appears as "the Sib" in *The Apes of God*]

that civilities have passed between you & Osbert so I gather that the flames lighted by your article have died down--." Osbert Sitwell's own letter protesting Lewis's implied intention to ridicule his family is among the Lewis papers at Cornell and is quoted on page 216 of this dissertation.

[40] This letter is not among the Schiff papers in The British Library. For its contents I rely on Sydney and Violet Schiff's paraphrase and comments. Moreover, the contents of Violet Schiff's written response to Lewis strongly suggests that one of Violet's letters of this period (written between 29 April 1924 and 5 May 1924) is missing from the Cornell collection. In the missing letter she seems to have described at some length her feelings of pain and confusion about what she refers to in her 5 May 1924 letter as Lewis's "distorted & erroneous" portrait of her and Sydney in "The Apes of God" excerpt.

[41] See Violet Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 26 April 1924.

[42] Violet Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 5 May 1924.

[43] Violet Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 6 May 1924.

[44] Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 5 May 1924.

[45] Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 11 November 1926.

[46] See Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 15 November 1924.

[47] Lewis is quoted in Schiff's letter to him of 15 November 1924.

[48] Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 25 June 1925. It is very likely that Schiff deliberately adopted an irritating tone in this letter, in an attempt to free himself from any commitment to resume financial dealings with Lewis. It is interesting, in this context, to consider the comments of Schiff's nephew and close friend, Edward Beddington Behrens, on his uncle's handling of troublesome relationships hinging on money: "Sydney had a great sense of humour and dealt in a most original way with members of his family who were always trying to sponge on him. I remember his once telling me, with roars of laughter, that faced with my uncle Charlie's urgent request for a further loan, he replied, 'I'm sorry I cannot afford it, I've just bought a new Rolls-Royce'" (Beddington Behrens, Look Back-Look Forward, p. 62).

[49] Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 25 June 1925.

[50] Firminger, Jam To-day, p. 30.

[51] David Garnett, The Flowers of the Forest, p. 225.

[52] John Rothenstein, Summer's Lease, p. 186.

[53] John Rothenstein, Brave Day, Hideous Night, p. 70.

[54] One or the other of the Schiffs expressed admiration, praise, gratitude, fascination, etc. upon reading the following Lewis works: Violet, 2 October 1925: "The Foxes' Case"; Violet, 8 December 1925: "The Physics of the Not-Self"; Sydney and Violet, 11 March 1925 and Sydney, 11 November 1926: The Art of Being Ruled; Sydney, 24 December 1926 and Violet, 28 December 1926: The Lion and the Fox; Violet, 11 March 1927 and Sydney, 21 March 1927: The Enemy No. 1: "The Revolutionary Simpleton"; Violet, 7 October 1927: Time and Western Man; Violet, 28 November 1927: The Wild Body; Sydney, 11 June 1929: Paleface.

[55] The letters document at least eight separate invitations to dinner between 6 November 1926 and 29 October 1929.

[56] Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 6 November 1926.

[57] Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 11 November 1926.

[58] On 1 December 1926 the Schiffs left London for a winter on the continent; the next letter in the collection is from Switzerland, dated 24 December 1926.

[59] Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 5 February 1929.

[60] Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 29 March 1929.

[61] Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 11 June 1929.

[62] Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 29 October 1929.

[63] Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 19 November 1929.

[64] Anne Wyndham Lewis, quoted in Bernard Lafourcade, "Chere Mrs. Lewis," p. 17.

[65] See Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 8 April 1931.

[66] Schiff began his lengthy response to Hitler with the statement: "I am impressed by the perspicacity of your survey of Hitlerism." Commenting on Lewis's "rare capacity for assimilating" and his "lucidity in exposing" unfamiliar theories, Schiff nevertheless concluded his letter with a statement that reflected an opinion of Lewis's political journalism widely held by his contemporaries: "But I think this sort of thing is a terrible waste of time and energy for such an artist as yourself" (Sydney Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 8 April 1931).

[67] Violet Schiff, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 18 May 1931.

[68] "Lewis was severely ill the latter half of 1932, again in early 1933 and early 1934, undergoing one major and several minor operations" (Linda Sandler, "*The Revenge for Love* by Wyndham Lewis," p. 6).

[69] Lewis, Letter to Sydney Schiff, 20 February 1933.

[70] Lewis, Letter to Sydney Schiff, 21 May 1933.

[71] W. K. Rose, in *The Letters of Wyndham Lewis*, pp. 212-13 and Wyndham Lewis, Letter to Sydney Schiff, 21 May 1933.

[72] Near the end of the novel, Blackshirt informs Dan that "'Horace Zagreus often misinterprets what we tell him—as often as not he gets it all wrong!'" (*Apes*, 476/496). Blackshirt's assessment is indeed accurate. On several occasions Zagreus concludes a "broadcast" with a personal comment that indicates his lack of comprehension of the Pierpoint material he has just recited. On these occasions Lewis encourages his reader to dissociate Zagreus from Pierpoint by making these discrepancies apparent. Consider, for example, the exchange that follows the broadcast on pages 254-66/267-79 of the novel: "Kein exclaimed 'Bravo! Bravo! Couldn't have been better done! *Awfully good*! I congratulate you on your wonderful memory!' 'Yes, awfully good!' Isabel panted, frowning and smiling. 'I think Horace would have made an excellent actor, at least he would require no prompter with such a memory as he has got. But you were once an actor, weren't you? Astonishing!' 'Yes wouldn't he--I have often thought of that. Anyone would be taken in--I'm sure I forgot for the moment myself that he was giving a recital. Ha! Ha! So like him, isn't it--every word, like everything else about him, borrowed!' 'I wish other things were as easy to borrow as words are,' Horace Zagreus said, moulding Kein with a heavy eye. 'Yes, I daresay you do!' 'Well there is the peroration! But it was not all borrowed. Did you notice?' Zagreus asked Isabel with a pressing eagerness. 'Yes' Lionel replied, 'I don't seem to remember that part about the poets--.' 'No, that was mine! I made that up--I wasn't sure if it came in all right'" (*Apes*, 267/280). Consider also Zagreus's contradictory interpolation as he finishes a broadcast later in the novel: "'Satire to be good must be unfair and single-minded. To be backed by intense anger is good--though absolutely not necessary.' 'Absolutely not necessary.' 'No not necessary--better without it.' 'Oh.' 'But you Ratner, if you had the talent, would make a good satirist.' 'You think so?' 'I am persuaded that you would.' 'I am not so sure about that Horace!' 'Oh yes--if you had the talent.' 'I know. If.' 'Yes. And if your anger were more sustained!' Horace lay back and fanned himself and smiled at Margolin, who had been silent and now looked a little damped by so much satire, and Ratner knew that the 'broadcast' was at an end. He darted a deadly look of solipsistic understanding at himself in the mirror--with hooked frowning eye-in-profile, sank down in relaxation, yawned with a bristling peep of fangs and sighed. 'What did you think of it?' Horace asked suddenly, in almost a timid voice. 'What Horace?' Horace saw that his duettist was cross. 'The scene Julius--what we have just done together Julius.' 'I thought it was good! Was it all Pierpoint this time Horace?' 'Every word!' 'Very striking!' 'Except

the gag where you come in.' 'Oh, that was yours?' 'Most of it.' Horace leant over to speak in his ear. 'What do you think I paid him for it?' Ratner grinned the bad grin of a black sheep--sheepish but full of turpitude--a financial sheep. 'Do you really pay him--for things like that?' 'No do be sensible! Pay him! Of course I pay Pierpoint for everything I get! The labourer's worthy of his hire.' 'Yes.' 'No but tell me Julius. What would you suppose I paid him for that. Roughly!' Zagreus coaxed him, to persuade him to put his sense of values in motion quickly and tell him roughly what he thought would be a fair price. 'I confess I can't guess.' 'Not guess!' 'No.' Bored, smiling with difficulty. 'I give it up Horace!' Horace paused a moment, uncertain and crestfallen. 'Well.' He cleared his throat. 'A tenner!' he breathed in Julius' ear. 'A cool tenner!' said Margolin who had leant over to listen. 'A tenner! Not bad was it?' 'What for--about Hazlitt?' 'From the epigram--that was the start--down to where you came in--if you had talent--you remember?'" (Apes, 452-53/472-73).

[73] Lewis, The Lion and the Fox, pp. 285-86.

[74] Lewis, "The Politics of Artistic Expression," p. 225.

[75] Lewis, A Soldier of Humour and Selected Writings, p. 400.

[76] Lewis, The Lion and the Fox, p. 136.

[77] Ibid., p. 137.

[78] Ibid., p. 195.

[79] Ibid., p. 135.

[80] Ibid., p. 138.

[81] Ibid., p. 135.

[82] Ibid., p. 135.

[83] Ibid., p. 137.

[84] Lewis, "The Politics of Artistic Expression," p. 224. "Art is there instead of something real," Lewis wrote in Anglosaxony (1941). "It dispenses you with the necessity of acting yourself; it acts for you like the actors on the stage; it absolves you from the necessity of stammering out something yourself;--it says it better than you can say it; or it sets before you a noble exemplar . . . " (p. 44).

[85] Ibid., p. 225.

[86] Ibid., p. 226.

Chapter 15

[1] Blackshirt, who provides the narrative analysis while giving the bewildered and intimidated Dan a tour of the Finnian Shaw library, focuses on the scene of recognition where "'the hero of the story feels himself seized with a terrible faintness! For here, locked up with him in this confined space, far out upon the ocean, is a person that he recognizes to be himself--no other!--only an Osmund of about seventy-five--a contemporary of Cockeye--with long white beard complete!'" (Apes, 566/590). Contemporary readers could not fail to identify this episode as derivative of a passage on pages 219-21 of Osbert Sitwell's novel, The Man Who Lost Himself, which includes the following lines: "While he was mechanically observing these details, the tall stranger rose, and in a voice which it seemed to Tristram he had most certainly heard, not only before, but constantly, every day--(or was he merely experiencing again, he wondered, that repetitive sensation which induces you to believe that this same thing has occurred, this same person been encountered, at some previous time which you cannot recall?)--he said, speaking with a curious, but unpleasantly conscious charm, 'I was expecting you, but not yet: you, who always ruin yourself through being too late, are for once too early.'--Tristram did not pay much heed to the words, for as he enunciated them, the stranger, raising the angle of his head so that the light gilded its outline, turned his eyes full upon those of the younger man. During the brief time that this movement occupied, an interval so fleeting as scarcely to count at all, he lived through the most disturbing and significant, as it was the most unreal, instant of his whole career. At that moment, the world reeled for him. It was then, only then, that the feeling that he had indeed come into contact with this man before, firmly established itself as the truth: only then that he recognised in this elderly, elegant figure--his own figure; in the handsome, lined face, rather spoilt by the fleshy pouches sagging beneath the eyes, his own face; in the hard, stubborn, insensitive old mouth--his own mouth; in the dead, cold eyes, his own eyes and himself" (pp. 220-21).

[2] Lewis, Letter to Charles H. Prentice, 12 August 1929.

[3] Lewis, Letter to Jessica Dismorr, 5 November 1929.

[4] See The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, p. 134.

[5] Lewis, ibid., pp. 140-41.

[6] Lewis altered the names of a number of characters as he proceeded with the novel. Krang became Ratner; Lady Rawdon became Lady Fredigonde Bentley-Foljambe, then Lady Runacres, then Lady Fredigonde Follett; Lady Eulalie became Robinia; Robert Newbolt became Robert Wright; Constance Boyd Flaxman became Julia Dyott; Harry Streatfield became Harry Caldicott; Blubbs became Cubbs; Dick Wadenham became Dick Whittingdon, and so on. Indeed, Matthew Plunkett remained Andrew through successive drafts of the novel, and appears as such in

a rather jarring proofreader's oversight in the published versions. (These changes are made at various points throughout the typescript and proof copies of The Apes of God at Buffalo.)

[7] Lewis, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, p. 141. On 8 April 1924 Eliot wrote to Lewis, saying that he presumed that Lewis had "altered the name 'Osmund.'"

[8] At this time Lewis reminded Eliot that he still retained in his possession "various fragments . . . such as the Lenten Party" (Lewis, Letters, p. 149). Lewis, frustrated in a dispute with Eliot about the latter's possible publication in The Criterion of other pieces--most notably, the twenty-thousand word essay entitled "The Perfect Action," which was not published until 1931, when it appeared as part of The Diabolical Principle and The Dithyrambic Spectator--told Eliot that these "odds and ends" in his possession were "no longer at your disposal for publication" (Lewis, Letters, p. 149).

[9] Osbert Sitwell, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, "Friday."

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Osbert Sitwell, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, "Wednesday."

[13] John Pearson, Façades, p. 169.

[14] The degree to which Edith Sitwell herself felt that she had suffered a public humiliation at the hands of Coward is revealed in a letter she wrote to Harold Acton after she had asked him early in 1923 to help her arrange to stage Façade at Oxford in October of that year. In fall she wrote: "I am feeling miserably disappointed. I've seen Osbert, who tells me it is impossible for me to do Façade at Oxford. He says in the first place, they have decided to go abroad, which will mean Willie Walton will not be here,--and I cannot manage the music side of it,--also he says that after London Calling I cannot risk it, as probably little Coward's supporters (being far in excess of intelligent people in number) would flock to the performance to insult me, and that it would be too undignified to expose oneself to it. I am most frightfully sorry and angry and disappointed, and I do hope you have not taken a lot of trouble already. If you have, we will think of a good excuse,--one can say that my health is not good enough, or something. Meanwhile, I'm looking forward enormously to the lecture, and please forgive me about Façade. I want to do it, but if I did it, and anything went wrong, you can understand things would be impossible. I will come by the train you mention. Thanks awfully, Harold, for being such a loyal friend and supporter. I'll never forget it" (E. Sitwell, Selected Letters, pp. 29-30). Evidently Coward apologized much later to the poetess for the embarrassment he had caused her, for in December 1926 Sitwell wrote him a four-word letter: "I accept your apology" (E. Sitwell, Selected Letters, p. 31).

[15] Osbert Sitwell, quoted in Pearson, p. 199.

[16] W. J. Turner, *Smaragda's Lover*, p. 49.

[17] Ibid., p. 18.

[18] Ibid., p, 77.

[19] Osbert Sitwell, "A Few Days in an Author's Life," p. 21.

[20] Ibid., p. 24.

[21] Ibid., p. 22.

[22] Pearson, *Façades*, p. 229.

[23] See Pearson, *Façades*, chapter 12.

[24] D. H. Lawrence, quoted in Pearson, *Façades*, p. 231.

[25] Aldous Huxley, *Letters of Aldous Huxley*, p. 141.

[26] Osbert Sitwell, caricatured as Fisbo, laments:
But, Lord, he calls me fat,
Jibes at my trousers, topper and cravat,
My hair, my second chin, my queenly nose
And my immortal works (both verse and prose).
Worse yet, he does not scruple to aver
I have a most unpleasant character;
Opines my customs low, my manners bad,
My conduct such as would disgrace a cad,
And by and large contrives, in brief, to show
He knows me better than I care to know.
(Robert Nichols, *Fisbo*, p. 154)

[27] Robert Nichols, *Fisbo*, p. 39.

[28] See Roy Campbell's letters to Lewis in the Cornell collection.

[29] Roy Campbell, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, [n.d.].

[30] Edith Sitwell, Letter to Mr. Discon, [1922]. This draft letter is written on a page that contains, also, what appears to be an early draft of "Popular Song" from *Facade*. This would suggest that the letter (like the poem) was composed in 1922 or somewhat earlier.

[31] F. R. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry*, p. 73.

[32] Geoffrey Grigson, "New Books on Poetry--and Miss Sitwell," p. 16.

[33] See Yeats's letter in *Satire & Fiction*, p. 29; it is quoted in chapter 4 above, on page 52 .

[34] Naomi Mitchison, quoted in *Satire & Fiction*, p. 33.

[35] Lewis had not yet experienced the kind of serious libel threats which were to cause him a great amount of trouble in the next few years and were to result in the suppression of several of his completed works.

[36] Frank Swinnerton, quoted in *Satire & Fiction*, p. 35.

[37] Lewis, *Satire & Fiction*, p. 40.

[38] Sacheverell Sitwell, quoted in Simon Blow, "The dilettante myth," p. 10.

[39] Sacheverell Sitwell, Letter to Hildegard Tiessen, 29 September 1976.

[40] Lewis, "Introduction to the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Edition," p. [5].

[41] Lewis, *Blasting & Bombardiering*, p. 92.

[42] Ibid., p. 91.

[43] Edith Sitwell, *Selected Letters 1919-1924*, p. 43. She continued: "--Once I pricked my big toe and planted the mark on the p.c. and wrote '*Rache*' on it. We also send him raving mad telegrams. I got one sent to him from Calais to his address in Percy Street, which run thus--(the German is a reference to his book on Hitler): Percy Wyndham Lewis, 21 Percy Street, etc. Achtung. Nicht hinauslehnen. Uniformed commissar man due. Stop. Better wireless help. Last night too late. Love. Ein Freund. Signed. Lewis Wyndham, 21 Percy Street. And two days ago he got a telegram saying 'Achtung. Nicht hinauslehnen. The Bear dances.'. . . Also, L. hates being thought to be a Jew, and Osbert's secretary, finding out that a man called Sieff is organising an exhibition of Jewish artists, has written in the unfortunate Sieff's name to Lewis, asking him to exhibit, with the result that Lewis and Sieff are having a fearful row, and all the Jewish artists are vowing vengeance on Lewis for insulting their race" (pp. 43-44).

[44] Osbert Sitwell, *Tales My Father Taught Me*, p. 91.

[45] Ibid., pp. 91-93.

[46] Edith Sitwell, *Aspects of Modern Poetry*, p. 39.

[47] Edith Sitwell, *Selected Letters 1919-1964*, p. 47.

[48] Ibid., p. 52.

[49] Ibid., p. 52.

[50] Ibid., p. 90.

[51] Ibid., pp. 113-14.

[52] Ibid., p. 231.

[53] Edith Sitwell, "'The Ape of God' or 'Next to Godliness,'" p. [1].

[54] Edith Sitwell, "Preface," p. 1.

[55] Of the seven pages that make up the chapter, three pages are taken from Aspects of Modern Poetry and one and a half from I Live Under a Black Sun.

[56] Edith Sitwell, I Live Under a Black Sun, pp. 150-52.

[57] Edith Sitwell, Taken Care Of, pp. 100-101.

[58] Ibid., p. [13].

[59] Rowland Smith, "Snooty Baronet: Satire and Censorship," pp. [181]-82.

[60] Edith Sitwell, "Percy Wyndham Lewis," p. 1.

[61] See Sacheverell Sitwell, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 11 January 1918.

[62] Pearson, Facades, p. 121.

[63] Peter Quennell, The Sign of the Fish, pp. 29-30.

[64] In an essay collected posthumously in Queen Mary and Others, Osbert Sitwell recalled a Christmas Eve celebration in 1920 at which Ha mur (along with 23 other guests, including Sydney Schiff) was present. "Iceland," as he was known to his friends, was found to be missing from the group in the latter part of the evening. Eventually he was found in an upper room, Sitwell records, "staring intently in a looking-glass. When asked what he was doing, he stated that he was fixing his image in the glass . . ." (p. 169).

[65] Richard Aldington, A Passionate Prodigality, p. 38.

[66] Reggi Turner, quoted in Violet Wyndham, The Sphinx and Her Circle, p. 95.

[67] Violet Wyndham, The Sphinx and Her Circle, p. 95.

[68] Osbert Sitwell, Noble Essences, p. 129.

[69] Quennell, *The Sign of the Fish*, p. 30.

[70] Ibid., p. 30.

[71] Harold Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete*, p. 106.

[72] Violet Wyndham, *The Sphinx and Her Circle*, p. 100.

[73] Osbert Sitwell, *Laughter in the Next Room*, pp. 282-83.

[74] On 12 August 1922 Sacheverell Sitwell wrote to Lewis, inviting him to come to Renishaw on Friday, 25 August; on Tuesday following the visit (5 September) Lewis wrote to Violet Schiff about his return from Derbyshire. So his letter from Renishaw, dated simply "Wednesday" must have been written on 30 August 1922.

[75] Lewis, Letter to Violet Schiff, [30 August 1922].

[76] Geoffrey Singleton, *Edith Sitwell*, pp. 29-30.

[77] John Lehmann, *A Nest of Tigers,* p. 82.

[78] Osbert Sitwell, *Laughter in the Next Room*, p. 330.

[79] Edith Sitwell, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 7 September 1920.

[80] Edith Sitwell, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, "Tuesday."

[81] Smith, "*Snooty Baronet*, Satire and Censorship," p. [181].

[82] Pearson, *Façades*, p. 17.

[83] The family name underwent significant modifications from Cytewel to Sytwell to Sitwell (see Pearson, *Façades*, p. 17).

[84] Pearson, *Façades*, p. 17.

[85] See Pearson, *Facades*, pp. 17-19 and Burke's and Debrett's genealogies. Lewis was not alone among his contemporaries to strike the Sitwells in this Achilles heel of family history. In the 1950s, Evelyn Waugh, growing impatient with Osbert's tendency to be oversensitive, suggested that he revert to the old family name and call himself Hurt Hurt. (See Pearson, *Façades*, pp. 17-18.)

[86] Sacheverell Sitwell, Letter to Hildegard Tiessen, 29 September 1976.

[87] Osbert Sitwell, "A Few Days in an Author's Life," p. 95.

[88] Osbert Sitwell, quoted in Pearson, *Façades*, p. 200.

[89] A *non sequitur* by Osbert at that conference created an outrage among theatre people, and the ensuing controversy (which came to be known as the "Actors' War") did not subside until well into the following year. (For further elaboration on the nature of the controversy, see Pearson, *Façades*, p. 200 and Osbert Sitwell, "A Few Days in an Author's Life," passim.)

[90] Underlining mine.

[91] Osbert Sitwell, "A Few Days in an Author's Life," p. 106.

[92] Ibid., p. 102.

[93] Ibid., p. 102.

[94] Ibid., p. 103.

[95] See *Apes*, 357-365/373-380.

[96] The passage continues: "He inflicted a light blow upon his own skin beneath the table--Sib to follow suit hacked out but she hit Mr. Wildsmith with her foot by mistake. 'I was a perfect fool not to have thought of that!' Sib panted, plunging herself into sackcloth and ashes, in clownish imitation of the clowning of Osmund, and they both took the tumble together, their eyes on each other. Wildsmith (more meretriciously chinese, the Bloomsbury sinologue *genre* Chu-chin-chow, at every moment) put on a mask of deep offence. Pedants!--what was this they were talking about? Who was a pedant? What next! 'Of course. Pedants!' Lord Osmund repeated. *There's no of course about it!* said the indignant mask of Wildsmith, Bloomsbury Mandarin of the First Button. *No of course about it!*" (*Apes*, 372/388-89). Arthur Wildsmith, the Bloomsbury sinologue and token pedant in the novel is modelled on Arthur Waley, assistant-keeper in The British Museum's sub-department of oriental prints and drawings, and prolific translator of Chinese and Japanese literature. Lewis's portrait of Waley, who appears as Wildsmith both at "Lord Osmund's Lenten Party" and "Pamela Farnham's Tea Party" is consistent with contemporary observations about him, such as those of Peter Quennell who recalled his "whispering, reedy voice" (Lewis: "shrill little lisping throat") and "habitual air of dignified remoteness" (Lewis: "tired contempt"). (See Quennell, "Arthur Waley, 1889-1966," pp. 585-84 and *Apes*, 201/211.) Lewis would have encountered Waley frequently in the later years of the war, as both were members of the literary group that met regularly in Pound's apartment in 1917. He would have known him later as a favourite of the Sitwells, who, as one commentator has noted, "seem to have been captivated by Arthur Waley" (Jonathan Spence, "Speaking of Books: The Explorer Who Never Left Home," p. 36). Moreover, Harold Acton, in *More Memoirs of an Aesthete*, stated that Edith Sitwell (at whose flat Acton met Waley) "said that Arthur was one of the three people who really understood her poetry" (p. 29).

[97] Acton, *Memoirs of an Aesthete*, p. 106.

[98] Huxley, Letters of Aldous Huxley, p. 132.

[99] Lewis, Blasting & Bombardiering, p. 187.

[100] The tricoteuses were Parisian women who attended meetings of the convention and encouraged the bloody excesses of their leaders, all the while carrying on with their tricotage (knitting).

[101] It is interesting to note, in this context, Evelyn Waugh's comments in a 23 August 1930 entry in his diary, written during a visit at Renishaw: "The servants very curious. They live on terms of feudal familiarity. E.g., a message brought by footman to assembled family that her ladyship wanted to see Miss Edith upstairs. 'I can't go. I've been with her all day. Osbert, you go.' 'Sachie, you go.' 'Georgia, you go', etc. Footman: 'Well, come on. One of you's got to go'" (Waugh, The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh, pp. 327-28).

[102] Lewis, Rude Assignment, p. 53.

Chapter 16

[1] Lewis, "Mr. Zagreus and the Split-Man," p. 124.

[2] W. W. Tarn, Hellenistic Civilisation, pp. 353-54.

[3] The identification of Horace Zagreus with Horus-Ra has been made by Sheila Watson in an unpublished paper on The Apes of God presented at the University of Alberta in 1972.

[4] Sir E. A. Wallis Budge, From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt, pp. 218-21.

[5] The image of Zagreus as a prominent ape is projected in several passages in the novel. Blackshirt, for example, calls him "'the worst Ape of the lot!'" (Apes, 481/502) and tells Zagreus to his face that he is "'as bad as the rest!'" when it comes to doing those things that Pierpoint denounces (Apes, 594/618).

[6] Richard Aldington, Life for Life's Sake, p. 347.

[7] C. J. Fox and Robert T. Chapman, in Lewis, Unlucky for Pringle, p. 144.

[8] Lewis, Blasting & Bombardiering, p. 46.

[9] Michael Holroyd, Augustus John, pp. 347, 490.

[10] Ibid., p. 647.

[11] Augustus John, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 5 July 1930.

[12] Marjorie Firminger, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, 27 July 1930.

[13] Peter Quennell, Letter to Hildegard Tiessen, 18 November 1976.

[14] Roy Campbell, Letter to Wyndham Lewis, [1930?].

Conclusion

[1] Ezra Pound, "Augment of the Novel," p. 52.

[2] Walter Michel, "Lewis Revalued?," pp. 6-7.

[3] Bernard Bergonzi, The Turn of a Century, p. 186.

[4] Bergonzi, "The artist and his armour," p. 1216.

[5] Lewis, Time and Western Man, p. 171.

[6] Ibid., p. 405.

[7] Ibid., p. 396.

[8] Lewis, The Enemy, No. 2, p. 5.

[9] Edgell Richword, Essays & Opinions 1921-1931, p. 300.

[10] Lewis, Wyndham Lewis on Art, p. 273.

[11] Lewis, Time and Western Man, p. 257.

[12] V. S. Pritchett, Books in General, p. 252.

[13] William H. Pritchard, Wyndham Lewis, p. 78.

[14] Lewis, The Letters of Wyndham Lewis, p. 415. In Rude Assignment Lewis wrote: "'The Apes of God' is the only one of my books which can be described as pure Satire (unless we wish to speak of verse): there is much farce, comedy, and other things there too, but as a satire it must generally be classed" (p. 52). Lewis frequently referred to The Apes of God as satire; moreover, he wrote several extended commentaries on the subject of satire in works including Men Without Art, The Mysterious Mr. Bull, and The Apes of God itself. A consistent and dominant theme in these writings (which are not in all respects consistent with each other) is expressed in Rude Assignment, where Lewis wrote: "in a work of art, in writing or any other mode of human expression, where there is truth to life there is satire" (p. 46). His assessment is made more concrete in the following remarks in The Mysterious Mr. Bull: "The satirist looks down upon the human scene, enlarges it for his peculiar ends, and by means of the sort of lenses employed by Swift in Gulliver, shows the earwig

to be in fact a small-scale dragon, loudly demanding its St. George, and revealing what goes on in the jungle of a maiden's hair, or what rope-ends start out from her bare forearm--though in the throes of our sexual superstition we call it 'down'" (p. 151). Lewis's reference here to Gulliver's Travels is in keeping with his own perception of the particular tradition in which he--as a satirist--operated. Throughout his writings about satire he spoke of his own work as belonging to a tradition that was dominated, in his mind, by men like Swift and Ben Jonson. Yet, in considering his remarks on the subject of a community of satirists or a satiric tradition, it is worthwhile to recognize that satire was not, for him, a distinct genre. To be a satirist, he remarked in Men Without Art, is "to play the critic and the artist in one" (Enemy Salvoes, p. 45). He described the satirist, in The Mysterious Mr. Bull, as "an artist [whose] technique of destruction is subject to artistic laws as much as dressmaking or architecture" (p. 144). Satire was, for Lewis, in other words, a distinguishing feature of a work, be it novel, verse, or drama; and so he counted among his fellow practitioners of the art, at various times, not only Jonson and Swift, but also Dryden, Fielding, Dickens, Shaw, Lawrence, Joyce, Roy Campbell, Auden, Eliot, and others.

[15] Pound, "Augment of the Novel," p. 53.

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APPENDIX

THE APES OF GOD

Dramatis personae as listed in Gerald Reitlinger's copy

Dick Whittingdon	Dick Wyndham
Horace Zagreus	Horace Cole plus Wyndham Lewis
Matthew Plunkett	David Garnett
Mélanie Blackwell	Gladys Hynes
Michel	Michael Sevies (?)
Julius Ratner	John Rodker
Richard	Edward Wadsworth
Jenny	Fanny Wadsworth
"Bloggie"	Olga Lynn nee Loewenthal
Lionel Kein	Sydney Schiff
Pierpoint	Wyndham Lewis
Kalman	Raymond Mortimer
Starr-Smith ("Black Shirt")	Roy Campbell
Lord Osmund Finnian Shaw	Osbert Sitwell
Lord Phoebus Finnian Shaw	Sacheverell Sitwell
Robinia	Georgia Sitwell
Lady Harriet Finnian Shaw	Edith Sitwell
Cockeye	Sir George Sitwell
The Sib	Ada Leverson
The Fin	Icelander
Arthur Wildsmith	Arthur Waley
Harry Caldecott	Harry Melville
Monty Mayors	Monty Sloman
Siegfried Victor	Siegfried Sassoon

Off Stage

Hedgepinshot Pickwort	Edgell Rickword
Horty	T. S. Eliot
Vernède	Paul Maze
Robert Wright	Robert Graves
Jonathan Bell	Clive Bell
Harold Pope	Harold Acton
Jacques Coq d'Or	Jean Cocteau
Paula Kennedy	Win Henderson

J.F.C.
Sept. 1978